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DOMINICAN MONASTIC SEARCH

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DOMINICAN MONASTIC SEARCH is published by the Conference of the Nuns of the Order of Preachers of the United States of America. The Conference is an organization of independent monasteries whose purpose is to foster the monastic contemplative life of the nuns in the spirit of Saint Dominic.

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DOMINICAN MONASTIC SEARCH is a spiritual and theological review written by the nuns. Its purpose is to foster the Dominican monastic contemplative life by the sharing of insights gained from study and prayer. It is published once a year as a service to the nuns. It is also available to the wider Dominican Family and others upon request, from whom a donation of \$8.00 to aid in the cost of printing would be appreciated, when possible.

Contributions to this review should be researched and prepared with concern for literary and intellectual quality. Manuscripts submitted should be clearly typed, single spaced, on one side of the paper only. The deadline for manuscripts is October 1st of each year. Minor editing will be done at the discretion of the editors. If major changes are desired, these will be effected in dialogue with the authors. The editors, in consultation with the Conference Council, reserve the right to reject inappropriate manuscripts, though reasons will be given to the authors with courtesy and encouragement. The Open Forum section is offered to those nuns who would like the opportunity to express their ideas briefly and informally, and to encourage dialogue among the nuns on spiritual subjects. Each separate contribution to Open Forum should be limited to approximately 500 words.

All book reviews and poetry should be sent to Sister Mary of Jesus (Bronx). Open Forum contributions should be sent to Sister Mary Martin (Summit). All other articles should be sent to Sister Mary Catherine (Elmira).



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THAT ALL MAY BE
ONE *in unity*
JN 17:21

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EDITORIAL

Our Constitutions, in harmony with the Rule of St. Augustine, tell us that

...the first reason for which we are gathered together is that we may dwell together in unity and have one mind and one heart in God. Reaching beyond the limits of the monastery, this unity achieves its fullness in communion with the Order and the whole Church of Christ. (Const. #2,1)

Here we have a vision of unity which truly opens the mind wide and enlarges the heart. It embraces not only the local community but also the whole Dominican Order and the entire Church, like a series of ever widening concentric circles. Within that broad vision of unity is the unity of all the nuns of the Order, and specifically for our purpose, the Conference of Nuns of the United States for whom the external basis is our Constitutions. The Conference is at the service of that unity, or unanimity, and tries to foster it in various ways.

As you all know, it has been our hope over the past few years to produce a book of simple proportions describing our way of life and intended for outside readers and/or prospective candidates. There has been some hesitation over it because it was feared that we might be unable to offer a unified presentation of our life which would satisfy our diversity of expression and the distinct spirit of each monastery here in the United States. We invited papers on different aspects of our life and observance, based on our Constitutions, from our nuns in the various monasteries in view of the proposed source book. The results were encouraging. After reading the papers we feel that we will be able to present a very positive, vital and unified description of our American Dominican life to potential readers.

In this issue of DOMINICAN MONASTIC SEARCH, besides the usual papers on topics of general interest, we are printing most of the papers, oriented to the source book as they have come to us. Due to the increasingly high cost of printing and our Conference budget we are omitting a few papers which are, for the most part, revisions of some printed in a previous issue of DMS and which will be included substantially in the projected book. We hope that you will be able to share some of our enthusiasm as you read these papers.

Our presentation begins with some basic works: our Dominican roots in the Word of God, in the monastic sources, and in the origins and charism of the Order. These are the foundations out of which all else grows. Then we move on to other elements and attitudes of our way of life: a very comprehensive and well documented paper on common life and the vows, a shorter one on modes of penance old and new; then there are two on monastic work, one from the point of view of our monastic sources and the other from that of contemporary theology. These are followed by one on initial and ongoing formation in Dominican monastic life and one on Dominican government. Then we turn to a very original and provocative paper on some background attitudes towards relationships in community and in its governing process. Next, we take a look at some Dominican Nuns of Paris who exemplified our way of life in a noble manner; and then, outside the ambit of Dominican life, at the life of the well known English poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins. We conclude our bountiful fare with a delightful commentary on the Book of Jonah. You will find, in addition, some excellent book reviews and poetry.

We hope that you will be pleased with this entire 1986 issue of DMS. We thank all of our nuns who have generously contributed time and talent to the writing of the papers, both those of general interest and those more directly related to our life. We ask you all to pray that the Holy Spirit will direct our efforts on behalf of the next stage of our source book. A good deal of editorial work and revision is still necessary in order to offer a harmonious presentation faithful to our sources and attractive to the modern reader. We trust that the completed project will be a genuine witness to the dedication, vitality and unanimity of our American Dominican Nuns.

Sister Mary Catherine, O.P.
Elmira

Reaching Beyond
the limits of the monastery,
this unity
achieves its fullness
in communion with
the Order
and
the whole Church of Christ

THE GOSPEL: SUPREME PATTERN OF DOMINICAN MONASTIC LIFE

Sister Mary Magdalen, O.P.
Monastery of Saint Dominic, Newark

Multiple new opportunities are offered today for one to live a rich Christian life in minute fidelity to the gospel while remaining a laywoman. A corollary might very well be a voiced or unvoiced question addressed to women who have embraced the monastic state as have those about whom these pages have been written:

"What are you doing in a monastery?"

The question is one to which a Dominican nun should be able to give an understandable reply. It is also one which God who has called her to a monastery might justifiably put to any Dominican nun; ... which, as she implicitly puts it to herself at every moment, should constantly stir the Dominican nun to fresh zeal in her service of God.

A glimpse at the answer made to God by the Dominican nun; how she views herself and the meaning of her life; and her response to whomever wishes to understand the Dominican Monastic Life is the burden of this book. It begins by searching into the gospel roots of her pattern of religious life.

THE GOSPEL - NORM OF ALL RELIGIOUS LIFE

When the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council stated that "... the fundamental norm of the religious life is a following of Christ as proposed by the gospel" (P.C. 2.a), ¹ and that this, therefore, was for all religious institutes their "supreme law", they were only re-stating a tradition of more than a millenium and a half of the Church's lived experience. Subsequently, the Council Fathers' statement was quoted in the 1983 Code of Canon Law (662) at the head of the chapter on the obligations and rights of the members of religious institutes.

Both Council and Canon Law wished to make clear that religious life, with its mission of dedicated witness to all the People of God, is not primarily and essentially based on human-made laws and patterns of living. Instead, it is a reverent and intense probing of the Law of Life which Christ as model proposes in his own life and teaching. "Religious life involves ... a continuous return to the sources of all Christian life" (P.C. 2) ² and this return is, above all, to the gospel.

At the same time, Council and Canon Law were placing religious life in a perspective pregnant with two important implications:

Religious life is NOTHING MORE than the Christian life, i.e. not "off against" it in pursuit of some esoteric and separatist way to God.

Religious life is SOMETHING MORE, in that it is the commitment of one's whole life to the simple and single-minded pursuit of the gospel way. Its specific norms are oriented to this and its life style reflects it. ³

Religious constantly have to experience their own identity in remembrance of this tension between the nothing-more and the something-more. It both humbles them and spurs them on.

The gospel is "... the power of God leading everyone who believes in it to salvation" (Rom. 1:16). This "power of God" is given and contained in Jesus himself; all salvation and the ultimate coming of God's Kingdom is in him. He and the gospel, the Good News he came to bring, stand at the center, the focal point of all history. This is not some static entity but the dynamic nucleus of boundless spiritual energy. Before it, all pressed forward to it. From it flow direction, power, fulfillment and judgment of human existence and of the whole created universe.

The Good News was entrusted by Jesus to his followers. They were to witness to him and his redemptive work. Thus, within the vocation of all Christians is the mission to proclaim in some way the message of salvation. They carry it forward in their own person from generation to generation as leaven in the world. God is secretly using it to raise the whole mass (Mt. 13:33), until the mysterious course of salvation history will reach its final fulfillment. Religious dedicate themselves to this work by handing over "... their entire lives to God's service in an act of special consecration which is deeply rooted in their baptismal consecration and which provides an ampler manifestation of it" (P.C. 5). ⁴

THE MONASTIC FORM OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

Few religious are asked to explain and justify their way of following Christ more than those who have heard and answered a call to the monastic contemplative way. This is because it is true that for the vast majority of people the following of Christ as proposed by the gospel is spontaneously associated with images of evangelization and apostolic social service. But to follow Christ as a religious, consecrated to his Person and to carrying on his work, is to dedicate oneself to so much more than the activity of spreading the gospel message and engaging in external forms of service to one's fellow human beings - essential though it is that there be those who do so.

Deeper than such activity, and that which alone can authentically sustain it, is the heart of the gospel: God's pressing offer of salvation, his desire to restore his image in all men and women. The monastic form of religious life enters deeply into this heart and aim of the gospel. But when one searches out how this is so one must be open to gospel vistas which elude the casual observer. Some of these must now be brought into clearer focus.

EARLY MONASTICISM - A NEW RESPONSE TO THE GOSPEL

When monastic life came to birth in its cenobitical form in the early fourth century as a "new thing" that the Holy Spirit was doing among the People of God, what it had to say and give was far from alien to the gospel.. Its bones and sinews had been gradually maturing and taking on flesh in the womb of three centuries of radical Christian life. As such, it came to

birth in a particular age and culture but it was the life-giving breath of the Spirit, not the age or culture that conceived it. As it grew in wisdom, in stature, and in favor with God and men, it found expression in certain external patterns consonant with the customs and mentality of an age earlier than our own; (Did not the gospel message itself!) but it did not derive its principles from that age.

To our twentieth century mentality looking back with critical eye, the means employed by these monastic pioneers may seem foreign. However, both their lives and their literature present them as meticulously intent on literally applying the gospel words to their lifestyle. In the New Testament writings they found inspiration or confirmation for details of their life in a way that may seem contrived to an age like our own which pursues another sort of literal-ness. But we must beware of judging their interpretation to be exaggeration or an aberration of which in their uncluttered simplicity they were not guilty. Neither dare we lose sight of the principles that guided them: the call to radical detachment and dedication of every interest and energy to God which they heard and heeded in the gospel texts. Through these single-minded men and women God's vision for the Church was fueling a new dynamo of gospel power. Salvation History was moving into a new era; the charism of monastic life would support it from within. So it has been throughout succeeding centuries; so is it meant to be today.

MONASTICISM TODAY - HEIR OF A TRADITION

Those who embrace monastic life today are the privileged heirs of a tradition. The principles by which they are guided and can authentically live their unique approach to the "following of Christ as proposed by the gospel" are something received for which they are responsible. Later chapters in this book will develop in detail the monastic elements in the life of a Dominican nun. They can be understood neither by herself or others unless they are recognized as expressions of the basic principles which have guarded the monastic charism from its earliest beginnings. It is for this reason that a brief survey of the tradition has been necessary in this introductory chapter. ⁵

The ascetical demands that have characterized monasticism through the ages emerge in different shapes and dress today. Now, as always, their value is understood and experienced primarily in so far as they bestow or safeguard freedom to keep one's eyes fixed on Christ, one's heart open to his presence and surrendered to his action. Thus the genius of the monastic life itself fashions the Dominican nun to a harmonious integration of her inner life with the external everyday patterns of her monastic journey with the Lord. Her life is not primarily focused on her own perfection. She measures her life and actions against what the gospel reveals of Christ - his ways and his teaching - with no need self consciously to advert constantly to her actions for their own sake.

Monastic life from its beginning to the present has been a giving of one's life to God and for others in a service of BEING rather than of DOING ... a life of universal love and support ... a life that proclaims belief in the hidden power exerted for good (or otherwise) by every human being upon other persons, known or unknown. Monastic life is a mystery of grace and supernatural faith. It will remain true to its mission so long as it remains true to its God-given mode of accomplishing it, to its own hallowed charism.

CHRIST AND THE MONASTIC PERSON

The remainder of this chapter will put into a kind of juxtaposition some aspects of the life of Christ with those of the Dominican monastic life in order to see from within how a Dominican nun views the gospel as her supreme law.

The Self-emptying of Christ

We borrow a phrase from Saint Paul as descriptive of the life of Christ: "His state was divine, yet he ... emptied himself ... even to accepting death, death on a cross" (Phil. 2:6-8).⁶

Christ's was an attractive, strong personality, with a clear sense of self-identity, free, true, fearless. It was all turned over to the purposes of his Father. Yes, he would know days of glorious preaching, teaching, healing, miracle-working, but they were overwhelmingly out-balanced by the long years of self-emptying obscurity, in humble everyday tasks; and his life-work was ultimately crowned in the total self-emptying of "death on a cross."

Perhaps there is no way that we can better characterize the life of the monastic person than in this idea of self-emptying. It draws her on, not for its own sake, but because in the call to monastic life there is a special grace - initially in seed and only to develop through the years - of understanding and desiring to reproduce in herself this radical gift of self solely for his purposes that was so basic to the inner posture of Christ before his Father. Jesus gives us glimpses of this here and there in the gospel text. The contemplative eye continually penetrates still further. It reads the message of the heart and mind of this "Son of Man" as he moves across the gospel pages sharing the ordinary human experience, with all the denial of self and surrender to God's providence that were demanded of him in the midst of the play of forces that surrounded him.

And so it is that the young woman of today who experiences an inner attraction toward the monastic contemplative life in a monastery of nuns is searching for more than a place where she can have much time for quiet prayer. The reality of her vocation to this life is better detected in the movement to radical gift of self that imitates Christ's life-long stance before his Father ... an inner movement of total commitment undelineated except in terms of faith and trust and loving desire to share Christ's redeeming work in what was eminently Christ's way.

The Prayer of Christ

In its Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Vatican Council II called attention to two aspects, among others, of the life of Christ by which religious are to manifest him "to believers and non-believers alike": Christ "... always obeying the will of the Father who sent him"; and Christ "... contemplating on the mountain" (L.G. 46).⁷ We have seen the first of these aspects concretized in the self-emptying of Christ. The latter phrase highlights a second attitude of Christ in the gospel to which the monastic person particularly relates: Christ's prayer.

The Council Fathers wished to do more than propose as model Christ literally "contemplating on the mountain". Figuratively the words sum up Christ the Man of Prayer. As one carefully re-reads the pages of the gospel with this aspect of the life of Christ in mind she comes to realize the ever present background of prayer that guided and supported Christ, and how much his prayer was a part of his mission for others.

Prayer for Christ was rest, rejuvenation, renewal of joy and strength through intimate converse with his Father. It likewise brought him confirmation of his mission and the means by which it was to be carried out. Prayer was the prelude to momentous decisions such as his choice of the twelve apostles; it was easily followed by lesser concerns as well, such as his going to them as strong head winds tossed their boat on the lake. He withdrew to lonely places to pray; he also prayed aloud in the presence of others, praising and thanking his Father, petitioning him for his followers. At one time Christ's need simply to be quietly alone with his Father was manifested; at a later time he wrestled with his Father as he prayed in the face of his imminent death. Engulfed in the anguish of his crucifixion he prayed to his Father and for others.

Prayer profoundly shapes the life of a Dominican nun. It not only unites her to God in love but it is also her great service of love for her neighbor (every other human person). Her prayer is not a self-oriented narcissistic occupation. It is going out from herself into God in worship and love and praise; it is standing behind every apostolic endeavor of preaching, teaching and spreading the name and message of Christ; it is carrying to him all the needs and desires, the joy and the pain of her sisters and brothers throughout the world; it is lifting up to God in her own heart and voice the inherent beauty and silent voice of praise of all the created universe. All this is a prominent factor in identifying her response as a contemplative to the gospel call to follow him who "during his life on earth offered up prayer and entreaty ... and submitted so humbly that his prayer was heard" (Heb. 5:7).⁸

The Dominican nun's daily horarium is governed not by the manual labor or domestic claims of her monastery but by the orderly arrangement of the periods of time spent in liturgical prayer. This and the time spent in private prayer and in an atmosphere of silence offer her the opportunity to enter into and carry forward the Incarnational and Redemptive gift and work of Christ. In union with him and his human experience of the world around him, she knows in prayer a fellowship with all other human beings. Hers is the reality of human kinship in which the power to support, comfort, assist and strengthen others knows no limitations of physical or geographical boundaries. It is as simple a fact of life in the spirit as any physically tangible interchange of human fellowship and sharing is on the natural level.

THE GOSPEL AND DOMINICAN MONASTIC LIFE SUBSUMED

Self-emptying and Prayer: Under these two headings we subsume the gospel life and effort of the Dominican nun. The other elements that make up the monastic pattern of her life flow out of or into these two. Community life, celibacy/chastity, obedience, poverty, manual labor, silence, solitude and enclosure - all minister to that self-emptying which itself

opens the nun ever more completely to God's presence and action, allowing her to be carried deeply and efficaciously into him in prayer. Within this double perspective is also found her exercise of the two great gospel precepts: love of God "with whole heart and soul and mind and strength" and love of neighbor "as oneself".

These two basic characteristics not only serve all the other elements in the Dominican monastic life, they also serve each other. The self-emptying which we have attempted to describe cannot be sustained without the constant support found in a life of prayerful union with Christ. There can, however, be no close union with him, no deep contemplative prayer in a heart preoccupied with self, cluttered with self-seeking projects or self-protecting inhibitions.

We have outlined in broad strokes the pattern of the Dominican nun's following of Christ as proposed by the gospel. Subsequent chapters will develop the individual elements in detail. Over each of them hovers the reality of her life with Christ which gives meaning to them all. Her perseverance in the monastic lifestyle leans heavily not on her "achievements" but on this personal relationship with the One who has called her. Faithful to what Christ has revealed in the gospel her life is gradually transformed by that power which Saint Paul in panoramic vision describes as "glory" (2 Cor. 3:8). The vocation of a Dominican nun is the call to a unique way in which God wills to manifest "the splendor of the gospel showing forth the glory of Christ, the image of God" (2 Cor. 4:4).

FOOTNOTES

Scripture quotations are from the New American Bible unless otherwise noted.

1. Abbott, Walter M., S.J., Gen. Ed., THE DOCUMENTS OF VATICAN II (Guild Press, New York, 1966), p. 468, Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life ("Perfectae Caritatis")
2. Ibid.
3. Cf. P.C. n. 5, ibid. p. 470
4. Ibid.
5. "... a tradition can be understood only genetically, with reference to its origin and evolution. Those ignorant of history are prisoners of the latest cliché, for they have nothing against which to test it." - Robert Taft, LITURGY OF THE HOURS IN EAST AND WEST (Liturgical Press, Collegeville), p. XIV
6. Jerusalem Bible translation
7. Op. cit., p. 77 ("Lumen Gentium")
8. Jerusalem Bible translation

DOMINICAN ROOTS IN THE MONASTIC TRADITION

Sister Mary Magdalen, O.P.
Farmington Hills

BIBLICAL SOURCES

God is the origin and destiny of every human person, and from the beginning, humankind has been engaged, however dimly or gropingly, in the search for God. We are irresistably drawn back to the source. The great ethnic religions of the world are testimony to this search, and in most, if not all, there has developed some form of monastic life - if we define "monastic" for the present as a life separated from secular society in order to seek after religious values. Christian monasticism is biblical in inspiration, and harks back to the Old Testament. In the Judaeo-Christian revelation, the desert is the privileged place of the encounter with God. God called his people out of Egypt, and it was during the forty years' trek through the desert that the Hebrews came to know their God, and to recognize themselves as his people (Ex. 19:1-8 ff; Dt. 4:32-40). Certain individuals were gifted with a more urgent summons, it seems, and so it was apart from the people and even the elders, alone on the summit of Mount Horeb, that Moses encountered God, as he had encountered him earlier, alone, before the burning bush (Ex. 24; 3:1-15). Elijah, the prophet, walked forty days and forty nights distance into the wilderness to the same mountain to experience God in that awesome solitude, in a gentle breeze (I Kgs. 19:1:14). We have also this well-known and beautiful text from Hosea: "I am going to lure her and lead her out into the wilderness and speak to her heart." (Ho. 2:14 ff) And the New Testament evangelists tell us that John the Baptist lived alone in the wilderness, until the Word of God came to him there and he became the dawn announcing the Light (Lk. 1:80). Christ himself frequently retired to "a lonely place" or a mountain wilderness to pray in solitude to the Father (Lk. 5:16). For Christianity as for Judaism, the desert or the wilderness stands as a symbol of the urge within the human heart to seek out the "one necessary thing."

THE "PEACE OF THE CHURCH"

The first three Christian centuries are called "The Age of the Martyrs," for during this period Christians suffered sporadic and frequently vicious persecutions. Christianity was outlawed; the faith was practiced in hiding and Eucharistic assemblies were held in the catacombs or elsewhere in secret. The Age of Martyrs ended with the Edict of Milan, called also the "Peace of Constantine" in 313 A.D. Constantine made Christianity the state religion, and eventually bishops were accorded secular status commensurate with government officials, and it became more profitable and easier to be a Christian than not to be one.

"The narrow gate of which Jesus had spoken had become so wide that countless multitudes were hurrying through it - some seemingly after privilege and position, without caring to delve too deeply into the meaning of Christian baptism and life under the Cross. Bishops competed with each other after prestigious positions. The rich and powerful seemed to dominate the life of the Church. The tares were growing so rapidly that they threatened to choke out the wheat."¹

Surely, Christians still remained who were not "conformed to this world." And indeed, a movement was about to be born which would confront the Church and its members with a radical definition of Christian identity and purpose.

THE MONASTIC REACTION

It is impossible to say who was the first monk. Certainly groups of holy virgins, celibates, ascetics, were in existence and revered in the Church even from apostolic times. St. Jerome wrote a rather legendary life of Paul, the first hermit, who, fleeing persecution towards the middle of the third century, had gone to the desert to spend the rest of his life in prayer and fasting. St. Athanasius of Alexandria had written, during the same period, a life of St. Anthony the Great of Egypt which was to exercise tremendous influence even in the author's own lifetime.

Anthony (251-356) is considered to be the father of Christian monasticism and indeed in some sense, of all forms of religious life. St. Augustine (354-430) mentions the LIFE OF ANTHONY as instrumental in his own conversion.² It has been said that Athanasius has here gathered all the elements of primitive monasticism in a spontaneous synthesis - that the life of Anthony is a paradigm or pattern of monastic life for the centuries to follow.

FATHER OF THE MONASTIC MOVEMENT

Anthony had responded to an inner call of God, as he heard the Gospel proclaimed in the liturgy: "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess, give to the poor, and come follow me." After many years spent in solitude in the desert, he was sought out by his friends. Athanasius writes: "He came forth as from a shrine....and when he spoke and urged them to keep in mind the future goods and the affection in which we are held by God, 'who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all,' he persuaded many to take up the solitary life. And so, from then on, there were monasteries in the mountains, and the desert was made a city by monks, who left their own people and registered themselves for citizenship in the heavens."³ Thus men and women flock by the hundreds, then by the thousands, into the desert. It is interesting that this phenomenon takes place when the world and the Church have made peace. The Church is made the religion of the state, and a veritable exodus takes place. In other words, Christianity developed *contra saecula*, in a stance over against the prevailing culture; when the status quo reversed itself and Christians could walk hand in hand with the world, immediately there was replaced within Christianity that cleavage, that separation, which has been called the most salient characteristic of monasticism. For Anthony had dramatized in his own life the issue at the heart of the Christian proclamation, the danger, as St. Paul put it, of being conformed to this world. The monastic reaction then, was counter-cultural; it was a lay movement, a grass-roots movement, and women as well as men were participants from the beginning. (Indeed, women monastics often served as models for men as well as for other women.) We call them the mothers and fathers of the desert.

RENUNCIATION AND FREEDOM

Men and women who withdrew from society to the desert found a life of freedom: freedom from all ties, obligations, property and possessions; freedom from social and political commitments; freedom especially from all that is false, deceptive, and illusory about the world; freedom finally, to seek God alone, to encounter him in the very ground of one's being, and henceforth to live in the ultimate, transcendent reality. But this did not happen automatically, for they were quick to learn that the most basic freedom and the one most difficult to achieve is the freedom from the false self.

SOLITUDE AND THE STRUGGLE

The Lord Jesus, as the evangelist tells us, "...was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil." (Mt. 4:1) This text announces a double theme in monasticism: the lure of the Holy Spirit on the one hand, and difficulty, asceticism, the battle on the other. The earlier desert period in the life of Anthony, during which he lived alone in an abandoned fortress, deals for the most part with his battles with the demons. There is much about demons in desert spirituality: as the Lord Jesus did, so also Anthony and all monastics go into the desert, not for peace and quiet for its own sake, not to escape the burdens and responsibilities of their brothers and sisters in the world, but to do battle, first with the demons within, in the dark places and caves of the heart. Solitude forces us to confront the self,⁴ to face all the obscure forces that we bear within ourselves. It opens out to us the unknown abyss that we all carry within us, abysses that are haunted

until we open them to the light of Christ, who has gone before us to the test and who himself confronted the mystery of iniquity and conquered. This is the struggle common to all followers of Christ, against the effects of original sin and personal sins. The desert fathers and mothers came to discern the "eight principle thoughts" or inclinations to sin, and the therapeutic measures which they developed to counteract our baser instincts and to grow in the opposing virtues or good habits, eventually grew to become the Church's ascetical theology.

One further note about the battles of Anthony and all monastics: sometimes the demons seem to be without, on the outside, as though the monk, nun, is called to engage in the contest for others who are far away and unknown, or to struggle with the common burden of evil which dogs humankind. We have always believed that in the mystical body of Christ the members can help one another in mysterious ways. A modern Carmelite, Ruth Burrows, puts it very well. "When one is open to God, one is opening the world to God; when one is totally surrendered, everyone else is more surrendered, too."

THE BEGINNINGS

This extraordinary phenomenon that we call the monastic movement soon focused around three main centers in Egypt: the eremetical or hermit life in Lower Egypt modeled on the experience of St. Anthony, (251-356); the *lavra* or grouping of hermits around a spiritual leader or *abba* in Middle Egypt, particularly at Nitria, Skete, and "The Cells"; and cenobitic monasticism, communities of brothers living a common life in common buildings, founded by St. Pachomius (290-347) at Tabennisi in the Thebaid, in Upper Egypt. There were also important centers in Syria and Cappadocia, and in the fifth century in Palestine, but Egyptian monasticism has distilled within itself the essentials of the experience, and it is this primitive tradition that has come down to us in the West, chiefly through the writings of St. John Cassian, (c. 360-435). As a young man Cassian left his native Rumania and settled first in Bethlehem, then in Middle Egypt, where he sat at the feet of the greatest of the *abbas*. What he learned there he later preserved for posterity in his famous books, THE INSTITUTES and CONFERENCES. We also learn a good deal about the first saintly ascetics from the APOTHEGMATA PATRUM (SAYINGS OF THE FATHERS) and the LAUSIAC HISTORY of Palladius (c. 370), another writer who actually lived the life of a desert monk,

MONASTIC ASCETICISM

"To this end" says Cassian "everything is to be done. Solitude, watches in the night, manual labor, nakedness, reading, and the other disciplines - we know that their purpose is to free the heart from injury by bodily passions and keep it free; they are to be the rungs of a ladder up which we may climb to perfect charity....None of these practices are of any profit at all if the purpose for which they are undertaken, charity, is lost."⁵

The Habit

For Abba Anthony the habit was a sleeveless linen tunic coming just below the knees; he also owned a staff, sandals, and two sheepskins, one to be used as an outer garment and one to serve as a bed on the bare ground. Soon the tunic became a long-sleeved, ankle-length robe, but the essential requisite, according to Cassian, was that the monk's garb should be made of common material and be simple. St. Benedict, born 480, a little over a hundred years after Anthony's death, repeats Cassian's proviso and adds that the habit should be made of "whatever can be got cheapest in the country where they live." Benedict, the European, adds a further note about adapting the habit to the climate,⁶ an unnecessary point for Egyptian monks where the climate is more or less the same summer and winter. Abba Pambo, in the trenchant style of the fathers, says that "the habit of the monk

should be such that he can leave it outside his cell for three days and no one would take it."⁷ Indeed, the stories in the APOTHEGMATA PATRUM leave us with the impression that the early monks resembled California prospectors much more than respectable clerics!

The Cell

The monks lived either in natural caves in the desert or in cells which they constructed out of stone blocks, with thatched roofs. The cell was of central importance in their asceticism. It was the "last ditch" or the "bottom line" in their great effort to redirect all the energies of body, mind, heart, and soul toward God. "Stay in your cell and it will teach you everything," they would say, meaning that unless a man or woman could find God here, in this one place, the cell, he or she would not find him by going someplace else. "Remain in your cell and your thoughts will come to rest," the old man said [to the disciple.] "For truly, just as when a she-ass is tied, her colt runs here and there but always comes back to his mother wherever she is, so it is with the thoughts of him who for God's sake remains steadfast in his cell: even if they wander a little they will always come back to him."⁸

Fasting

Always, as Cassian insisted, it was the end that mattered, and so the monks fasted, because they were fed by the word of God. The asceticism was only a means, and fasting was found to be an effective discipline simply to free the monk from undue concern for bodily gratification. In the early days of the monastic venture, the solitaries tried to outdo one another in feats of endurance. But soon the wisdom of the desert prevailed: "Abba Joseph said to Abba Poemen, 'When you were younger did you not fast for two days at a time, Abba?' The old man said, 'Yes, even for three days and four and the whole week. The fathers tried all this out as they were able and they found it preferable to eat every day, but just a small amount. They have left us this royal way, which is light.'"⁹ That is to say, they came to understand fasting as an exercise in liberation, in disengagement from the bonds of the flesh and the world, to allow the spirit to awaken, to be fully receptive to the Divine Word.

Prayer

How did one whose spirit was open and ready come to live in the Presence? The mothers and fathers of the desert devised a way of orienting the whole life towards God; of fulfilling the evangelical precept to pray constantly (I Thes.5:7). They loved to pray the psalms; they taught their disciples a mantra-like use of a phrase from psalm 69: "O God come to my assistance; O Lord, make haste to help me." Cassian quotes Abba Isaac: "This verse should be the first thing to occur to you when you wake up. It should precede all your thoughts as you keep vigil. It should take over as you rise from bed and go to kneel. After this it should accompany you in all your works and deeds. It should be at your side at all times.... This verse...reveals to us the One to whom we call, the One who sees our struggles and who is never far from those who pray to him."¹⁰

Or they would ruminate upon the psalms that they had prayed together at the common services. Whether they gathered daily or weekly, the first assembly was in the evening, after which they would retire to rest for some hours, (probably till about three A.M.) when they would come together again for the great night vigil, which lasted until dawn. They chanted psalms, followed by copious readings from the Old and New Testaments. Where there was no central church, they simply sat on the desert floor, and since books were a rarity, one of the monks would read or sing the psalms while each one prayed within his own heart. Then they would return to their cells and meditate on or chant the psalms as they worked. These first anchorites were largely unlettered, simple men and women, and so they would memorize the psalms and, indeed, whole sections of the Bible. The aim was a constant remembrance

of God by the gentle turning of the mind to him until they came to realize his presence all the time. In this life of simple union with God, work played an important role.

Work

"I sit down with God," Abba Lucius would say, "soaking my reeds and plaiting my ropes..." Cassian writes that it was impossible to say whether they work in order to pray, or pray as they work. They crafted baskets, sandals, ropes, nets and similar articles which one of their number would take periodically to market and sell in exchange for their bread. In addition, at harvest times when the demand for laborers was great, the monks would hire out as field hands (an eloquent indication that their idea of separation from the world was not a "holier than thou" kind of piety.)

"The basic place in asceticism given to work, a work that was effective, simple, and not too absorbing for the spirit, but real work and work well done, is the best guarantee of the realism of this asceticism. A monk who has to work primarily to gain his very simplified livelihood and to facilitate the practice of charity, and not merely to kill time, runs no great risk of losing himself in fantasies."¹¹

It is interesting to note that the great proto-monk, St. Anthony, wishing in his last years to go into deeper solitude, retreated to what he called the "Inner Mountain" and there, settling beside a source of clear water, he put in a vegetable garden, "so that he might have something to offer his guests." This wedding of the sublime and the prosaic has become common ever after in monasticism.

Separation from the World

Probably the most salient and outstanding characteristic of monasticism is this separation from the world. But it must be insisted that the monk does not see him/herself as anything other than human. The question the disciple asked upon entering the desert was: "How may I be saved?" This question recurs constantly in the SAYINGS OF THE FATHERS. It is essential to the phenomenon we are examining: so closely is the monk in touch with humanity, and first of all his own, that he sees and knows himself to be a sinner in need of being saved. Thomas Merton puts it very well: "Myself and my brothers in the world, we are just two men who have fallen among thieves and we do our best to get each other out of the ditch."¹²

The business of monastic life is to show up the material that needs to be re-deemed, and to open it to God and his grace. We might say, that the monk is "an experiment in redemption."¹³ He becomes in some sense humanity itself before God. He is separated only from what distracts from this great project. The knowledge of how to deal with human passions then, was basic for the remaking or recovery of alienated humanity, and it was learned slowly, by long, hard living, but it was part of the great treasure for which men and women came to the desert.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

Is the way of the desert a thing of the past? Do the ideals and the lifestyle of the first monks and nuns retain any relevance today? Let us take a cursory look at the historical development of monasticism.

John Cassian was born about four years after the death of St. Anthony the Great, in 360 A.D. As a young man he spent about twenty years in Egypt, experiencing monastic life in its full vigor, learning from the greatest of the old men, the "abbas." After the devastation of Skete by barbarians in 407-8, he eventually came to reside in Gaul where he founded two monasteries, one for men, one for women. Before his death in 435, he committed the wisdom of the desert to writing in his

greatest works, THE INSTITUTES and THE CONFERENCES, together a marvellous synthesis of the Eastern monastic tradition, which he thus transmitted to the West.

St. Benedict, the father of Western monasticism, was born in 480, and so highly did he value Cassian's writings that THE CONFERENCES were read every evening before Compline in all Benedictine monasteries throughout Europe until the Middle Ages and beyond. In the early 13th century, THE CONFERENCES OF CASSIAN were the favorite spiritual reading of a young canon named Dominic de Guzman, founder of the Dominican Order, who was thus to hand down the monastic tradition to the Order he founded, even while introducing a revolutionary addition to it, as will be shown in the following chapter.

MONASTICISM TODAY

The ethos of the desert, which might be summed up in the values of asceticism, poverty, detachment, and simplicity, seen as indispensable means for attaining the life of union with God, has been found valid in every generation to this very day, notwithstanding those periods of decadence when the vision was obscured. The monk/nun of today, hearing the call, the "lure of the Spirit" while yet living in our affluent Western society, struggles to adhere to that spirit of austerity and renunciation, in order to focus on the "one thing necessary." (Lk. 10:38-42) That they discover the Divine Mystery, alone makes their lives important for the society in which they live. But there is more. Dwelling in the depths of the Spirit, in him who is the Ground of all being, they dwell also in the heart of the world, for the world is in the heart of God. What greater or more important work can there be, than that the world's heart should be converted from within?

FOOTNOTES:

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4. ^{cf.} Louis Bouyer, A HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY, VOL.I, The Spirituality of the New Testament and The Fathers, pg.313 Seabury Press, New York, 1982
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ST. DOMINIC AND DOMINICAN ORIGINS AND CHARISM

Sister Mary of God, O.P.
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The question we put to ourselves here is
"What are you doing in a DOMINICAN monastery?"
To search into the meaning of the call to be a
Dominican we have to know something about St.
Dominic and the needs of the Church to which he
was responding. An overview of Dominic's life
and mission will be followed by some comments
on the Order of Preachers, and on the Nuns in
particular.

A New Evangelical Movement

The gospel is the common inspiration of all Christians of all times, but periodically it erupts as a measure of the pace and standards of the Church. The late 12th century world into which St. Dominic was born had seen an evangelical awakening, confirming again the gospel's innate vitality and relevance. This particular evangelical period was marked by a special sensitivity to the life of the primitive church. "With its poverty and humility, the religious life of the primitive church became an ideal." 1

The dynamics of this movement had to be witness to the faith, fraternal love, poverty, the beatitudes. But these aspects of the primitive church to which the term 'apostolic life' had always referred now received a new orientation. The text of Acts 4:32, giving the basics of the believers' "one heart and soul" and their having all things in common, was taken up again. But along with it, the focus was on Luke 10:1-12, where poverty was expressly commanded by Christ as part of the apostolic mission.

Central to this new thrust was preaching, itinerant preaching - distinct from both monastic stability and episcopal preaching. "While the common life based on the total abnegation of private property continued to be the economic and spiritual basis of the vita apostolica, that life was swept up and transformed by a new dynamism."²

This movement was seen to operate sooner and more spontaneously among lay men and women since it took place not by a revision of existing institutions, but by a return to the gospel. Before long lay persons were claiming the right to preach in view of their evangelical way of life. Told not to preach unless invited by the local clergy, some continued when invitations were not given. They soon found themselves on the fringe of or outside the Church. There was widespread disillusionment with the official Church and many people were sympathetic to the preachers who denounced the worldliness of the clergy. In southern France this situation opened the way to the infiltration of the Catharists, or Albigensians, who were committed to dualist doctrines imported from the East. Living an austere life in poverty, they were teaching that the material world was evil, the soul imprisoned in a body. The people in the area had not been well instructed in solid doctrine and were taken in. If the Church was to reclaim her members she would have to make room for the new evangelical spirit, and also provide a more effective and informed body of preachers.

This is the scene St. Dominic journeyed into in 1203 and again in 1206, with his bishop, Diego of Osma. Writing to St. Dominic and his brethren in 1221, Pope Honorius III said: "God, who continually makes his Church fruitful in new children, wishing to bring our times into conformity with earlier (apostolic) days and spread the Catholic faith, has inspired you to embrace a life of poverty and regular observance and to devote yourselves to preaching the Word of God and proclaiming the name of our Lord Jesus Christ throughout the world."

Dominic, Son of Spain and of the Church

Dominic de Guzman was born around 1170 in Caleruega, Spain, in an austere rugged, mountainous region which had recently been won back from the Moors. Dedicated to the Church from his earliest years, he was sent to do his first studies and his training for the priesthood under the auspices of an uncle who was a priest in a nearby town. As he was learning to read, he was praying the psalms in this church environment.

At fourteen Dominic was ready to go to the schools at Palencia where he devoted about ten years to the study of the humanities and then theology. With the commentaries of the Fathers and by discussion and questions, he delved into the deeper meaning of the Scriptures. His knowledge of the gospels became clear and deep. Diligent student though he was, during a time of famine he did not hesitate to sell even his annotated books to aid the poor who were dying of hunger. He also founded an alms-house to provide stable help for the starving people.

Invited to join the cathedral chapter at Osma, Dominic spent almost ten years of his life there as a canon regular. Canons were priests at a cathedral who belonged to a chapter that lived a common life, and in this case followed the Rule of St. Augustine. St. Dominic was faithful throughout his life to the essential elements of such a life: solitary prayer joined to the liturgical prayer of the Church, the yearning for community life, and the taste for unanimity or harmony of spirit among the brethren.³

Bl. Jordan of Saxony, St. Dominic's successor, has given us his insights into this life at Osma. Whether or not he had first-hand information, we value the picture he sketches here of our founder. Jordan tells us, "He haunted the church by day and by night, devoting himself ceaselessly to prayer. . . . God had given him a special grace to weep for sinners and for the afflicted and oppressed; he bore their distress in the inmost shrine of his compassion, and the warm sympathy he felt for them in his heart spilled over in the tears which flowed from his eyes." Then in Jordan's words we have what could well be the heart of Dominic's charism: "He had a special prayer which he often made to God, that God would grant him true charity, which would be effective in caring for and winning the salvation of men and women; he thought he would only really be a member of Christ's Body when he could spend himself utterly with all his strength in the winning of souls, just as the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of us all, gave himself up entirely for our salvation."⁴

At the end of this section on Osma, Jordan tells us that Dominic read and loved the "Conferences" of Cassian, a book widely read in western monasticism. He relates, "With the help of grace, this book brought him to the highest purity of conscience and to considerable enlightenment in contemplation." The way of renunciation he found in Cassian became for him the path to the freedom and ardor which so characterized him.

Preaching Mission in Southern France

In 1203 Bishop Diego, prior of the Osma Chapter, was sent on an embassy to Denmark by the king of Castile. Dominic, subprior at the time, was asked to accompany him. This journey took them into southern France where the Albigensian heresy was embedded. Dominic spent the whole of his first night in Toulouse in debate with the innkeeper where they stayed, and by morning had won him back to the truth of the gospel. As it turned out, this journey had to be made twice. When Diego and Dominic arrived in the area again in 1206 on their way home, they met the Abbot of Citeaux and the other two monks who had been appointed by the Pope to combat heresy with a preaching mission in the south of France. Their efforts had met with almost no success. They were wondering if they should just return to their monasteries. It was at this point that Bishop Diego suggested a change in tactics. Instead of travelling in the style expected of Church dignitaries at the time, why not imitate the style of the original preaching of the Apostles, which, of course, was the style of the heretics. They would show they were equally evangelical and austere. The preaching of solid, well-argued doctrine combined with an apostolic life-style, modelled on Luke 10, was the suggested procedure. The papal legates were willing to try, provided someone would lead the way. Bishop Diego at once "sent his retinue home with all his baggage, and keeping only Dominic with him, he set off to preach, barefooted, begging his bread from door to door."⁵ And so began what came to be called the 'Preaching of Jesus Christ' in Languedoc, and indirectly, the Order of Preachers.

Dominic's First-born, the Nuns

Among those who responded to this preaching of the gospel with its values and way of life were the women eventually gathered together at Prouille, in what was to become the first monastery of Dominican nuns. Before Diego died in 1207, a group of eleven women had been assembled, whose names are listed in the earliest records. There is a charter, dated April 1207, granting the revenues of a parish to the prioress and nuns "recently converted by the example and exhortation of Brother Dominic of Osma and his companions."⁶ This is the first group formed into community by St. Dominic, and the story of Dominican nuns has begun! As time went on, their way of living the gospel took shape in a rule of life St. Dominic drew up for them from the ancient monastic tradition.

The Order of Preachers Emerges

Various preachers came and went as Dominic persevered in his mendicant preaching in this region for ten long years, sometimes with companions, sometimes alone. But he was never alone in his prayer. At Prouille there was always a base, a place of prayer and of concern for his mission. From the beginning the sisters were associated with what was called the 'Holy Preaching.' Their prayer and community life in the spirit of the gospel were a support as well as a base. The brethren who were joining Dominic in his way of life and preaching, and eventually wanted to bind themselves to him in religious profession, could also share in the full liturgical life of the sisters and see the lived reality of Christian community from which their preaching must arise and tend as to its goal. In 1215 Dominic received the vows of the first brethren, and the Bishop of Toulouse confirmed the community of preachers in his diocese. The following year the Pope granted Church approval of the new Order of Preachers with its universal mission throughout the world.

Truth's Freedom: Dominic, Man of the Gospel

When Dominic set out from Osma he had no intention of forming a monastic community of women or of founding an Order of Preachers. He was responding wholeheartedly to the needs and circumstances of the time and place: the needs of the people in the area, of the sisters looking for an evangelical religious life, of the preachers who joined him. An ecclesial man, he was alive to the Spirit guiding the Church, and was sensitive to the needs of the Church.

Dominic had lived and assimilated the wisdom of the gospel. Concluding his LIBELLUS, Jordan tries to capture for us something of the "integrity of his character" and the "energy of divine zeal which carried him along." He tells of his steady calm mind, of his compassion and mercy, his cheerfulness and loveableness. He describes his days spent in companionship, in preaching to everyone, and his nights wholly dedicated to prayer. He gives the key to understanding Dominic when he says, "Everywhere, in word and in deed, he showed himself to be a man of the gospel."⁷

One way to try to describe the dynamic of his life is to say Dominic had made the breakthrough proclaimed in the beatitudes. He had so internalized the message that he lived it in the freedom of love. Blessed indeed is his poverty, his weeping, his hunger for truth. He is blessed in his mercy, his purity of heart, in the peace he brings to others. He can find joy in the hardships and persecutions he suffers because the kingdom is his! In a little 13th century writing on St. Dominic's ways of prayer, we are told that his prayer won from God for the Order the gifts of the Spirit and "such delight and enjoyment in putting the beatitudes into practice that each one would consider himself blessed in the most profound poverty," etc.⁸

St. Paul expresses something of the same spirit in the passage that ends: "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything." (cf. 2 Cor.6:4-10) It is to plunge into the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection; to lose one's life and to find it. We might call this self-transcendence. Celebrating the eighth centenary of Dominic's birth in 1970, Cardinal Villot described him as a man who was "stupefyingly free!"

THE ORDER OF PREACHERS - On the Fundamentals⁹

The Aim and Purpose of the Order

It is not difficult to picture Dominic and his followers embracing a life of gospel poverty and regular observance with enthusiasm, being totally free to preach the Word of God and proclaim the name of Jesus throughout the world. The Order was instituted for preaching and bringing people into contact with salvation in Jesus Christ. There is an urgency in the goals they have set for themselves. There is a focus on the Preacher of Galilee bringing salvation and reconciliation with the word of truth and by his death on the cross.

According to the bidding of St. Dominic the friars "live everywhere like upright religious men who seek their own salvation and that of others and, like the men of the gospels, following in the footsteps of our Lord, speak to God or about God among themselves and with others." There had not yet existed in the Church a specifically missionary Order. Evangelization for the friars means a universal proclamation of the gospel, to Christians as much as to non-Christians. Being wholly committed to spreading the Word of God, they follow in the footsteps of Christ the Savior. St. Dominic borrowed the formula "to speak only with God or about God," from

the monks of Grandmont. It reveals the synthesis of the two aspects of their life which he envisaged.

The Way of Life

The friars follow the apostolic way of life and share in the mission of the Apostles. The way of life is the source of their apostolic energies and sustains their evangelical activity. There is harmony between what they proclaim and what they live. Further, Dominic had seen that lack of sound knowledge was one of the reasons many evangelical movements had failed. This is why he incorporated study into his Order as an essential element.

The classical themes of the apostolic way of life begin to have a new orientation when coupled with the apostolic mission to preach. The theological basis finds expression in the two fundamental ideas of communion and mission. The Son lives in union with the Father and was sent forth to save the world through sharing that life of union. As St. Dominic conceived it the friars were: "with one mind leading a common life; faithful to the evangelical counsels; fervent in the common celebration of the liturgy, especially the Eucharist and the Divine Office, and in prayer; committed to a life of study and constant in religious observance." For the friars this way of life contributes not only to the glory of God and their own salvation, but is also of direct assistance in the salvation of others since it prepares and impels them to preach; preaching, in turn, contributes to their own growth in charity. "These elements are all inter-connected; they modify and enliven one another and, in their total harmony, are the life of the Order. In the fullest sense this is an apostolic life in which teaching and preaching ought to spring from the fullness of contemplation." This was later expressed in the well-known formula: to contemplate and to give to others the fruits of contemplation.

The Ministry and Form of the Order

In the ministry of evangelization the friars preachers are co-workers with the episcopacy, participating in the prophetic role of Christ; this work is completed in the sacraments of faith. There is built into the Order a ministry which is "an offer of the ultimate reconciliation of Christ, sacramentalized in forgiveness and climaxed in the unifying experience of worship in the Eucharist."¹⁰

St. Dominic did not want our own laws to oblige under sin so that his followers would accept them, as the Rule of St. Augustine says, "not like slaves under the bondage of the law, but like free persons in the liberty of divine grace." This leaves room for a wise and generous acceptance renewed day by day by the grace of the Holy Spirit within us. Also, because of the purpose of the Order, superiors can dispense from the Order's laws "especially in matters which might hinder study, preaching or the spiritual welfare of others."

Government of the Order

In the government of the Order, "the outstanding feature is the organic and balanced participation of all its members in the pursuit of the goal of the Order." Authority is completely realized and universal in the General Chapters and the Master of the Order. For the friars it is exercised proportionally by provinces and local communities with their priors and chapters. Our government is communitarian: superiors are ordinarily elected by the community, and in important matters, communities participate in their own government through chapter or council. (As we shall note again later, it is the Dominican form and spirit of government that characterizes government in the monasteries of the nuns of the Order.)

St. Dominic embodied in his personal authority firmness and love, and the openness of humility, desiring to be in the midst of his brethren as one of them. He himself stressed representative government, trusting the fundamental Christian principle that the Spirit is working in each member of the community and through the community as a whole. The development of personal responsibility through individual participation in the governmental process was far in advance of current thinking such as is now found in Church documents (for example, in Perfectae Caritatis #14). The trust that runs through the government and life of the Order is seen in its collegiality, subsidiarity and accountability. Dominican government presupposes a considerable degree of maturity, with great fidelity and responsibility.

This communitarian form of government is particularly suitable for the continuing self-study demanded not only by the spirit of continual Christian conversion, but also by the special vocation of the Order which impels it to adapt its presence in the world to each new generation and to the needs of the Church. The fundamental purpose of the Order and the way of life inspired by it retain their value in every age of the Church. But "it is the genius of our Order to renew and adapt itself courageously."

The Dominican Family

"The Dominican family is composed of clerical and cooperator brothers, nuns, sisters, members of secular institutes and lay and priestly fraternities." We are a family of men and women, within the whole spectrum of ecclesial ministry, with bishops and priests, as well as laity deeply involved in the world. This makes it possible to put together the many facets of the following of Christ which must be realized if the gospel is to be fully proclaimed.

The interested reader will have to supplement these few comments on the Fundamental Constitution of the Order and the brief sketch of St. Dominic with the available histories of the Order, the early documents and the lives of St. Dominic and other Dominicans.

We could reread the whole life of St. Dominic in the light of an aspect of Dominican spirituality as it has developed. The Dominican doctrine of grace expresses a conviction that the action of God is sovereign and primordial. There is faith in the absolute priority of God's grace to any human activity. Faith in God precedes any self-activity, however zealous: there is more trust in God than in one-self. Therefore we can speak of a serene, joyful spirituality. "God will give an unexpected future to the restricted meaning and scope of my own actions."¹¹

THE NUNS OF THE ORDER OF PREACHERS - On the Fundamentals¹²

In the Church, in the Order

Gathered together by the love of Christ and led by the Spirit, Dominican nuns respond to Christ's call to withdraw into solitude to worship the Father. In this way they live and express the paschal mystery of Christ which is death ordained toward resurrection. "At the heart of the Church, their growth in charity is mysteriously fruitful for the growth of the people of God, and by their hidden life they proclaim prophetically that Christ alone is true happiness."¹³ Within and through the Church they are "totally dedicated" to a contemplative life.

To foster their daily response to the Spirit, St. Dominic provided his nuns with the Rule of St. Augustine and Constitutions. He instructed the nuns himself concerning the Order and constantly showed his fatherly concern for them. These sisters, "free for God alone," Dominic associated with his preaching mission by their prayer and penance, by their whole monastic life. He expected the generosity of their lives. Their spiritual bond with the brethren, as part of the same Order, was eventually confirmed juridically.

The first Dominican monastery came into being, as we have seen, at Prouille in France. As the friars grew in numbers and were dispersed to preach in various places, women were drawn to the Word they heard and to the gospel way of life they saw. St. Dominic founded a monastery of nuns in Madrid; his letter to this community is the only one still extant. He exhorted them to "make progress every day," and since they now had a suitable place for it, to get on with living their monastic life to the full! At Bologna, after prayer and discussion with the brethren, St. Dominic decided a foundation of nuns there was "essential;" the plans he initiated were carried through by his successor, Bl. Jordan. In Rome, St. Dominic was asked by the Pope to assemble nuns from some traditional monasteries, and others interested in a more serious monastic life, in a foundation at San Sisto. Dominic summoned eight nuns to come to Rome from Prouille to be the nucleus of this large community, and he appointed one of them as prioress. There was a particular spirit and way of living the life in the community of nuns he had formed, and this was passed on. The same continuity of Dominican identity is evidenced when Jordan asked for some sisters to come from Prouille to Bologna to become part of the community taking shape there. When this was not possible he turned to San Sisto and received nuns from there for this new foundation.

Dominican contemplative nuns are an integral part of the Order of Preachers. Our monastic life has been enriched with the vision and spirit of St. Dominic and we can be seen for what we are only through the prism of our founder and the Order to which we belong. Along with the elements of ancient monasticism, there is woven into the fabric of our lives the compassion, the sense of purpose, that motivate us in our desire for the salvation of all; the focus on community derived from the Rule of St. Augustine; and the specifically Dominican spirit and form of our governmental structures. The interaction with the other members of the Dominican family also has an influence on our lives, whether directly or indirectly.

Christ the Savior, the Word of God

By their way of life both the friars and nuns tend toward the fullness of love of God and neighbor, a charity which issues in compassion and effective concern for the salvation of humankind. To follow Christ in the spirit of St. Dominic is to enter into the mystery of Christ the Savior. Penetrating more deeply into the mercy of God and his desire for the salvation of all, we come to share in his own yearning to show mercy. God "wants everyone to be saved and reach full knowledge of the truth." (1 Tim. 2:4) Continually receiving his Word of forgiveness and salvation in our own lives, we grow in compassion for other sinners. We become a plea for mercy for the world.

We are called to search for the truth, to put in the fore-front of our lives the Word of God, one of the essentials of any Christian life. This is true for all Dominicans. But the manifestations of the same Spirit, the same mercy, vary according to the gift. "It is for the friars, the sisters and the laity of the Order, 'to proclaim throughout the world the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,' and for the nuns to seek him, to ponder and call upon him, in secret, so that the Word which goes forth from the mouth of God will not return to him without fruit, but will accomplish those things for which he sent it." (Cf. Is. 55:10)¹⁴ Our gift is to be alert before the

Word and let it challenge us; to cherish it and let it fructify within us in silence; to study its meaning and manifestations; to celebrate it and let it return to God in liturgical praise and petition, and in its fulfillment in our lives.

Contemplative Life of Discipleship

Every Christian is called to "Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mk.1:15); to a conversion that will free the heart for God and the kingdom. Dedicated to a contemplative life, Dominican nuns are "called by God to remain, like Mary, seated at the feet of Jesus and to listen to his words." (Cf. Lk.10:39) This is a call to be his disciple, to listen, to reflect, to contemplate, to see and love deeply. It is to turn from our illusory self to the true self within, made in God's image. We come to see better our own need for conversion, and that the whole world is in need of God's redemption. We step back a few paces from the world God loves so much (cf. Jn.3:16) to draw closer to the heart of its suffering in creative love and prayer. Without the clutter of non-essentials, in our simple human living, we listen to the Word of truth and salvation.¹⁵

Reaching out to what lies ahead (Phil.3:13), we are consecrated to Christ through profession of the evangelical counsels. We see his humility, the basic monastic attitude, at variance with worldly values in any age. We follow the poor and obedient Christ, and seek to love him with free and undivided hearts.

Community, One Mind and Heart

Emulating the primitive church, we devote ourselves "to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." (Acts 2:42) While the whole monastic tradition looks to the early church in Jerusalem as an ideal for life in common, it is the Rule of St. Augustine that makes it the focal point of life in a monastery. Our Rule calls out, "Before all else live together in harmony, 'being of one mind and one heart' on the way to God (Acts 4:32). For is it not precisely for this reason that you have come to live together?"

Such unity of mind and heart is not easily achieved, and our own daily struggle gives us insight into human nature and into the conflicts throughout the world. We are called to be a sign of the reconciliation brought by Christ and preached by our brothers and sisters. We seek communion with the Lord and with one another in our daily celebration of Eucharist and of the liturgy of the Hours. Continual pondering of the Word of God helps to make us one. The Word forms in us a biblical mental attitude, and with the constant praying of the psalms, a certain transformation of consciousness.

In founding his monastery, St. Augustine wanted to recreate around him the same community as the Apostles had when they received the unifying gift of the Spirit. "Persevering in prayer with Mary, the Mother of Jesus," we, too, "ardently long for the fullness of the Spirit, so that with unveiled face we may reflect the Glory of the Lord and be transformed into his image, from splendor to splendor, by the Spirit of the Lord." (Cf. 2 Cor.3:18)

Seeking God "in the Freedom of the Spirit"

"In the freedom of the Spirit" the Dominican nun seeks God in a life wholly oriented toward this goal. Prayer is the center and heart of our life. Its rhythm pervades the day and the night. The liturgy, the reflective reading of Scripture, the prayer of adoration, prayer that is shared, and solitary prayer all converge in the Spirit's gift of prayer in the depths of the heart.

We offer one another an atmosphere of solitude and silence. Our monastic enclosure, with silence, study, work and penance, contribute to the growth within us of a life of prayer. We are also supported by our communal life of love for one another, which we joyfully share in vibrant community. Together we try to seek the will of the Father so that his universal kingdom of love might be realized in our midst even now. With the whole of creation we yearn for the fulfillment of the hopes of all people when God will be all in all.

Dominican Monastic Life Today

The rich elements of Dominican monastic life have been enfolded over a span of almost 800 years by countless women in various ways. In the mid-13th century, St. Margaret of Hungary, daughter of the king, distinguished herself in a Dominican monastery by her spirit of prayer and by lowly service of her sisters, especially the sick. Curupira, an Amazon Indian girl of our century who saw God everywhere and in all things, endeared herself to the Dominican community of which she was a member for forty years in Brazil.

The Dominican monastic life handed on to us is still flourishing. In more than 200 monasteries throughout the world there are women who have been called to follow Christ and the gospel in this way of life. Within our own century the Prouille community has made foundations in Canada and in Brazil. Nuns have gone forth from our many monasteries in Spain to make foundations, most recently in South Africa and in Chile. This is to mention but a few.

The first foundation in the United States was made in 1880 at Newark, New Jersey, by four nuns from the Dominican monastery at Oullins in France. Two of them were Americans who had entered there. In 1891 another foundation was made from France in Union City, New Jersey. There are now 17 monasteries of Dominican nuns in our country. In turn, the American nuns have been reaching out to Asia and Africa, having made foundations in Karachi, Pakistan (1959), Nairobi, Kenya (1965), and two in the Philippines (1977).

We look upon our monastic life as a whole and we look for new ways to balance and integrate its diverse elements. Solitude today includes occasional 'hermit days'; community has times of recreation and discussions. We have to balance the need for fostering an atmosphere of silence for others and a depth of silence for ourselves, with conversations with one another. We look for ways of situating the kinds of work we do into the rhythm and context of prayer. Living our life calls for a faithful responsibility to its goal and a sensitivity to the needs of others.

What we see as important is the truth of our life, founded on the truth of our prayer; expressed by the truth of our life with one another as sisters; by the seriousness of our confrontation with the Word, by our study, by the quality of our reading; by the reality of our work, our poverty, our material simplicity; by the growth of our unity, of our joy, of our freedom. This is not impossible, granted a daring faith in the fidelity of God who calls us to follow Christ in the Spirit of St. Dominic.

FOOTNOTES

1. Chenu, M.D., O.P., Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century, p. 239. The information on the evangelical movement is taken from two sections of this book: 6. "Monks, Canons, and Laymen in Search of the Apostolic Life"; and 7. "The Evangelical Awakening."
2. Ibid., p. 214.
3. Cf. Vicaire, M.H., O.P., The Apostolic Life, p. 93. The same author's account in St. Dominic, A Pictorial Biography, was also used in this section.
4. Jordan of Saxony, Libellus on the Beginnings of the Order of Preachers (edited and translated by Simon Tugwell, O.P.), p. 3.
5. Tugwell, Simon, O.P., editor, Early Dominicans, "Introduction", p. 12. The fine summary in this Introduction has been used in this section.
6. Vicaire, M.H., O.P., Saint Dominic and His Times, p. 122. There is a detailed chapter on Prouille in this book.
7. Jordan, op. cit., p. 26.
8. Tugwell (ed.), op. cit., p. 99.
9. In this section, unless otherwise noted, quotations are from the text of The Fundamental Constitution. The text used was reprinted in CIDOMINFOR, with a commentary by M.H. Vicaire, O.P.
10. Walsh, Liam, O.P., lecture entitled "The Gospel of Mercy for U.S. Dominicans", p. 6.
11. Schillebeeckx, Edward, O.P., "Dominican Spirituality," reprinted from Dominican Topics in South Africa, p. 105.
12. In this section, unless otherwise noted, quotations are from the text of The Fundamental Constitution of the Nuns, an unofficial translation from the Latin.
13. Abbott, Walter M., S.J., editor, The Documents of Vatican II, cf. "Perfectae Caritatis", #7, p. 471 and #16, p. 478.
14. Cf. Vatican Council II's document on Revelation: "The Church constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfillment in her." In section #8 the document explains that there is growth in the understanding of the words handed on to us through contemplation and study, through experience of them, and through preaching. In its document on the Missions (#40), the same Council elucidates the part contemplative communities have in the conversion of people with a number of texts from Scripture, reminding us that it is God who makes the word of salvation fruitful in the hearts of those who hear the gospel (cf. 1 Cor.3:7).
15. Cf. Lavoie, Sr. Claire, O.P., "Prayer for Preaching", in U.S. Dominican, Vol. 6, No.1, p. 10.

Wilderness

Ana halāk dodekh
the daughters sing

You've left (I know
the fault is mine);
everything is gray
my heart is dead.
My eyes would like
to turn to brine
but their waves are
rolled up in my throat
behind a stone.

Now You are gone
(and I'm to blame);
who'll roll away the stone
from the face of the desert?

The day is being jocular;
it can't fool me:
try as it will,
its music comes out sullen;
its poetry curls up dully
there in the roots
of the rock.

You've left
(as I deserve);
life is gone all gray
and I don't want it
anymore.

And now, what now?
One thing to do:
innerly write
on the tawny rock:
Return return
that I may live.

Shuvi dodi shuvi --
the waters sing.

Sister Maria of the Cross, O.P.
Summit

DOMINICAN NUNS AS FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST:
'COMMON LIFE AND EVANGELICAL COUNSELS

Sister Mary of the Annunciation, O.P. - Lufkin

Our Christian vocation is one of communion. The Church is a "sign and instrument...of communion with God and unity among all men." 1) The Vocation to religious life, and our Dominican vocation in particular, is a prophetic witness to the essential communitarian reality of Christianity. This will be the theme of my article. Religious life is truly meant to be a prophetic presence in the midst of the Church. 2) Religious are called to live the Christian life as a very visible and collective witness for the sake of the people of God. This prophetic charism is manifested through each of the vows. By poverty we witness to the fact that all Christians are called by the Gospel to share their goods with one another. By our vow of chastity we show that all Christians are called to chaste and unselfish love, and at the same time, chastity testifies to the primacy of the love of friendship in human relationships. By our vow of obedience we touch the heart of the Christian vocation, namely, Jesus' total self-giving to the Father's will. Throughout the article I use this characteristic of witnessing to describe the religious vocation. First we look at the Church as communion and show how this is reflected in our Constitutions and then go on to present each of the vows as the means for achieving this communion. The spiritual/historical development of each vow is dealt with very briefly, so we can see how it was perceived by the Church, lived by St. Dominic or in the Order, and finally how the vows are presented in our Constitutions.

RELIGIOUS LIFE

A vocation to the religious life is above all else a following of Christ in his total self-giving to the Father's will and a response to the impelling presence of the kingdom of God that Jesus as the Son of God inaugurated by his incarnation.

A theological basis for religious life can be found in both the Old and New Testaments. It is foreshadowed in the Old Testament by individuals such as the Nazarites and also in groups like the Rechabites. 3) Towards the end of the Old Testament period we see the emergence of a communitarian style of life such as practiced by the Qumran community. Their members practiced a common life, a "rigorous discipline of obedience" and also "joined celibacy and dispossession of property on its inner groups." 4) Much more importantly, though, are the prophets. They are preeminent models of the religious life because they were those "with a special vocation to the service of Yahweh." 5)

In the New Testament the "roots of religious life are to be found in...the poor, celibate, and communitarian life of Jesus himself...culminating in his obedience even to death on the cross." 6) After the event of Pentecost, the following of Jesus was embodied by the first Christians through the formation of a community grouped around the apostles. The inspiration for religious life "has always been to recapture, re-create, and prolong the...life of the first Christian community during the time of the apostles." 7) This primitive community included a life of unity and fellowship, built up and sustained by the Eucharistic celebration and prayer. Members held all things in common for distribution among themselves and to the poor as each had need. This community found its center in obedience to the apostles and included, even at an early date, the practice of virginity.

CHURCH AS COMMUNION

The emphasis on the Church as communion "is the central and fundamental idea

of the Council's documents." 8) Our communion in the Church is with the Father, through the Son and in the Holy Spirit. Life in common, in solidarity with our brothers and sisters, finds its source and completion in the Trinity. To encourage unity "...is in harmony with the deepest nature of the Church's mission"; to establish communion with God and amongst all his children. 9)

Both in the Gospel of John and in the Letters of Paul we find our life in Christ, our discipleship, and communion with one another constantly linked. "Father may they be one " (Jn 17:20-23). Jesus repeated this thought frequently in that last great prayer before his passion. He prayed that our communion with one another would be like his union with the Father. In verse 21 he speaks more intensely of his desire for this union to be complete and adds that our communion will bring the world to believe that the Father has sent the Son into the world. Our communion is, then, a proof of the incarnation and reveals to the world that the Father loves us as he loves the Son. Our Christian vocation consists in being in the Father and in the Son and finds its completion in becoming perfectly one through the Spirit. Paul develops this same thought when he writes to the Ephesians. God has revealed to us his purpose through Christ. This purpose, to be accomplished in the fullness of time, is to unite all things in Christ (Eph. 2:7-10). The real test of the authenticity of our Christian vocation, our preaching, and our witness of faith is our active striving for communion with our brothers and sisters, thereby cooperating with God's plan to be accomplished in Christ.

As Christians, then, we are called to communion. This communion is effected in us through the gift of the Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts. The Spirit is the bond uniting us with God and with one another (1 Cor. 12: 12-26). We are members of Christ, and therefore members of one another. Our works and gifts, though many and varied, are all united in the one Spirit who works in all of us, guiding us toward our common goal in Christ Jesus.

COMMUNION LEADS TO MISSION--THE NUNS' CONSTITUTIONS

When God chooses and consecrates us it is for the sake of others as well as for our own sanctification. Here again we follow the example of our Head, "I consecrate myself that they may be consecrated in the truth" (John 17:17). This is as true of us, as it is of those in the Order who exercise a direct apostolate. We have been consecrated for a specific work in the Church, to witness to a particular aspect of the mystery of Christ. Our vocation is given for the sake of God's people.

The Constitutions do not limit our communion to that which exists within the monastic walls. "This unanimity achieves its fullness in communion with the Order and the whole Church of Christ." 10) Communion leads to mission, that is, we share in the mission of Christ's salvific death and resurrection. "Our identity comes from being together in Christ, in his mission, in his communion with the Father." 11) Communion and mission, to love one's neighbor and to preach the Gospel, to proclaim reconciliation and peace: this is the essence of the Christian vocation to which our Dominican vocation gives witness. We, as Dominican Nuns, share in this mission through our communion and identification with the heart of Christ.

...to withdraw into the desert is for the Christian tantamount to associating himself more intimately

with Christ's passion and it enables him, in a very special way to share in the Paschal mystery and in the passage of our Lord from this world to the heavenly homeland. It was precisely on this account monasteries were founded, situated..in the very heart of the mystery of Christ. 12)

Jesus was sent by the Father into the world where he became the obedient and poor Christ. He was obedient to atone for disobedience, became poor to share our poverty and alienation. His participation in our alienation reached its culmination as he hung upon the cross, despised and rejected by us and seemingly abandoned by his Father. By his death and resurrection we received the gift of the Spirit who was sent to create a people who in turn would be sent as reconcilers. "We have a ministry of reconciliation." (2Cor 5:18),

Our life in community, rooted in God's love for us and manifested through his saving love in Jesus, is meant to be "an example to all of that reconciliation in Christ which our brethren also proclaim by word."13) Reconciliation is the primary task of the Church, that is, bringing all things together in Christ. Our preaching, our mission, is to live intensely dedicated to the struggle for reconciliation within our own experience of human weakness, woundedness and sin. We begin anew each day. Thus striving continually to become a loving communion of persons, listening and surrendering to the Spirit of God abiding in our midst, we become the "word" of reconciliation that our brothers and sisters preach in the active ministry.14)

MONASTIC LIFE

Religious are meant to be "experts in communion." We are called to follow Christ, our Head, more closely,-Christ who came as the "first-born" among many brothers and sisters. The religious community is a visible witness to the communion all Christians are called to strive for by faithfulness to the Gospel.

The monastic life from its origins, took its inspiration from the early Christian community described in Acts, principally, Acts 4:32-35 and 4:42-47. This is the ideal model and basis for our common life. The first monks considered their way of life as an imitation of Christ and a continuation of the life style preached and practiced by the apostles and this first Christian community. Living in community is meant to be the manifestation of the perfect love and unity that is the sign of God's presence and love that Jesus spoke of in John 17. Our common life truly lived is the proof and first consequence of the love of God dwelling in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. Unity of heart is not possible without openness and "listening" obedience to the Spirit of love calling us to surrender our selfishness in order to live the new life of love.

Integral to this primitive community ideal was the possession of all things in common as a means to a more perfect love of God and neighbor. This sharing of goods has remained the ideal of monastic poverty. Obedience is linked to poverty and the common life. Our obedience is to Christ who called the apostles to follow him, and it is expressed through and shaped by our Dominican spirit and Constitutions which particularize our living of the monastic vocation. We should note that our primary and essential witness is accomplished through our existence as a community. We share in the apostolic commitment of the Order precisely by striving to be a loving, hoping, praying, faith-filled community.

COMMUNION IN OUR CONSTITUTIONS

In Chapter I of our Constitutions, we read, "the first reason for which we are gathered together is that we may dwell together in unity and have one mind and one heart in God." The root of our unity, its source and first cause, is the love of God that has called us together in Christ Jesus. The Constitutions, following the ancient tradition, put before us the model of the apostolic community and say that our communion is "founded, built up and stabilized" in the Spirit of God. The Spirit makes of our many hearts one heart, and helps us to praise God with "one mouth." In the Spirit we who are many and varied become "one body, sharing one bread, in whom finally we hold all things in common." 15) Our communion is created through our understanding and consciousness of one another as possessing the same Spirit who makes us one body each with special gifts to be put at the disposal of all. 16) This is very important. Our commitment to common life and our willingness to lay down our lives for one another in imitation of Jesus is truly an obedience to the Spirit of God dwelling in our midst. Indeed, our striving to enter into a more perfect communion is the means by which our selfishness is stripped away and we become holy persons." 17) Monastic life is the way in which, through a lifetime of striving and learning, we put on Christ who asks us to love one another as he has loved us.

In order to be a community, each of us must freely embrace the work of seeking to have "one mind and one heart." This is the goal constantly before us. A community is not formed merely by many people living together. Communion with one another involves mutual participation in the goals of the community and a sharing of ourselves with one another. This is the task we are embracing when we say yes to a vocation to religious life. Our communion is fostered by our shared charism, our tradition and our living and working together within the structure of our Constitutions.

Our whole life finds its source in the spirit of the Gospel. We seek to put on the mind of Christ so that our community life can be based on and flow from our union with him. We strengthen and sustain this communion through prayer, and by our vows which commit us to Christ and to one another, to the Order and the whole Church. Through faithfulness to the vows we are set free to continue Christ's self-offering to the Father for the sake of our brothers and sisters. Meditation on these elements of the common life, clearly delineated in our constitutions, continually challenges us to examine the meaning and quality of our common striving. Let us examine these ideas in more detail.

VOW OF OBEDIENCE

OBEDIENCE IN THE CHURCH

Obedience was seen to be of special value in both the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament obedience to God was expressed by the covenant. God was their God and Israel was his people who were to be faithful through obedience to the law.

In the New Testament Christian obedience is obedience to Christ. In him and through him we imitate his obedience to the Father. "The work of the life of Christ is a work done in obedience to the will of the Father." 18) We live in the obedience of faith (Rom. 1:15; 16:26) under the new covenant (Mt 26:28; 1Cor 3:6) and under the new law of love (1Jn 13:34) in which is summed up the whole law and the prophets (Rom. 13:10). 19)

By Baptism the Christian has a "fundamental commitment to God " 20) and is consecrated to God through Christ. The idea of religious obedience emerged gradually from ordinary Christian obedience. Certain individuals desired to

live the following of Christ through obedience in a more intense and concretized manner of life. The religious life had its beginning in the early centuries of the Church with the first hermits. They sought to imitate the example of Jesus in the Gospels. They were to fulfill the obligations of their Baptism through dedicating their whole life to a very explicit imitation of Christ's total dedication to the Father's will and the establishment of the kingdom of God.

There are no consistently used texts for the counsel of obedience. The attitude of Jesus is the basis for the vow of obedience. 'Yet at the same time none of the vows is more scriptural than the vow of obedience. This is so because Christian obedience finds its source in the vocation to follow the example of Jesus! Fundamental to this vow is our imitation and assimilation of Jesus' attitude. We must put on the mind of Christ.

OBEDIENCE IN THE ORDER

Dominic's spirit of obedience is seen most clearly in the development of obedience in the Order. In the Dominican tradition only the vow of obedience is expressed in the formula of profession. That single vow contains and regulates all the elements of our life and is the cornerstone of our religious life. Obedience is "...more important than the other two vows, more important than discipline, the Rule or constitutions." 21) Dominicans pledge obedience to a person and precisely from this arises the elasticity and flexibility which is characteristic of our Dominican charism. The superior functions as interpreter of the constitutions enabling the Order to adapt to varying circumstances and situations. Vicaire, in explaining the flexibility of the first brothers, writes:

Nothing as yet depended on the authorities or external documents. Everything rested on the brethren and on the founder ...the Order had adapted itself without difficulty because the essential of its constitutions was the obedience of the brethren to Dominic and the obedience of Dominic to his Bishop...The legislation would remain in the hands of the brethren alone, the brethren in the hands of Dominic...22)

When the legislation was at last written down there was realized a "harmonious exchange between the authority of the Master...the evidence of the text, and unanimity of hearts." 23) There are two very important realities presented in this text: 1) The importance of the community in Dominican tradition; and 2) the harmonious exchange between the superior and constitutions, and unanimity of hearts. From the first point we can draw some important conclusions. Vicaire believes that obedience as it is envisioned by the Order could foster an absolutism or even tyranny on the part of a superior except for the formative role exercised by the Dominican community. We see in Dominic a certain deference toward his brothers and a care "to stand aside before the counsel, deliberation and common decisions of his brethren." 24) Dominic knew how to exercise authority and did so, but "he also knew when it was necessary to waive it before the community in the interests of a happy equilibrium." 25) The role given to the community was a uniquely Dominican contribution to religious obedience and has been essential in forming our specific identity as a religious order. In our tradition the community creates the legislation and the superior interprets that legislation within the norms given in the constitutions. We work together, superior and community, toward the realization of our common goal.

Dominic's role was at the center of the community. During the foundation years,

before the existence of any written documents,, all authority was invested in him as the founder to whom the brothers owed obedience. Dominic and his successors became the embodiment of unity within the Order. In 1217 after the Order had experienced a rapid growth, Dominic dispersed the brothers far and wide, to preach the Gospel. The Order "was to remain solidly united by grace of the direct bond between the brethren and the founder." 26)

Dominican stability was identified with the vow of obedience. Before this time religious men based their stability on their affiliation to a particular monastery, or abbey, or to a particular Church or Saint as was the custom for the Canons Regulars. 27) Dominican stability derives from the Order's faithfulness to its mission and purpose. 28) It is, therefore, in the vow of obedience that Dominicans find the source of their unity, universality, flexibility and adaptability.

A major factor contributing to the Order's flexibility is the law of dispensation. Dispensation was an integral part of the Dominican Constitutions, not so much for the sake of the friar as "for the better achievement of the high purpose of the Order." 29) Dispensations were a necessary part of our legislation and closely connected with obedience. The law of dispensation was needed to balance all the elements of our life. These were so complex that at times they seemed in opposition. This was a new concept, "previously dispensations had been used only as a concession to human weakness." 30) Dominic envisioned dispensation as one of the means by which the members would fulfill the aim of the Order: the salvation of souls. In this same spirit the Dominican Constitutions were the first not to bind under pain of sin, a point about which Dominic was adamant.

OBEDIENCE IN THE NUNS' CONSTITUTIONS

Succinctly and clearly our Constitutions cover the whole tradition of Dominican obedience. Our relationship to the Order is declared through our profession formula in which we promise obedience to the Master of the Order and thereby, in our particular way, share in the unity and purpose of the whole Order. Our monastic life bears the unique stamp of our Dominican tradition. The constitutions assert that obedience is our "principle of unity." 31) It is obedience that enables us to attain our common goal and purpose and through obedience we "continue faithfully in its (the Order's) spirit and mission." 32)

Obedience promotes the common good and directs the whole community as a single body toward the common goal of charity. 33) We achieve this unity through obedience to our superior and by a "listening" obedience to one another. Our profession commits us not only to Christ but to each and all the members of our religious community. To obey is to listen to one another, to be attentive to the needs within the community, to be at the service of our common goals, as well as to be obedient to the person of the superior, who in turn must practice the same obedience and care for the common good.

The Constitutions also refer to Dominic's ability to exercise authority and at the same time to defer to the community. This sets the tone for understanding obedience in the Constitutions. Our superior stands at the center of community as Dominic did. She is at the center of the unity we strive for, and with us she shares the common obligation to be obedient to Christ. It is in living the common life responsibly, with the intention of surrendering our will to the loving will of Christ as expressed through our Constitutions and our common life, that we become

a loving communion of persons, one in mind and heart. Charity was at the heart of all that Dominic did and our Constitutions tell us he asked for both "fellowship and obedience." 34)

OBEDIENCE IN THE CONSTITUTIONS AS AN IMITATION OF CHRIST

Through obedience "we especially imitate Christ, who was always subject to the will of the Father for the life of the world." 35) We imitate Christ in his obedience for the salvation of the world and we are also more closely bound to the Church and to its building up in love. This is the task to which obedience commits us. We are consecrated "wholly to God" through obedience 36) and at the same time participate in his work of redemption. Our obedience joined to the offering of Christ becomes for us and in us a continuation of his offering to the Father. Our profession gives to all our endeavors, to our whole life the "character of a sacrifice for ourselves and the Church in whose perfecting the whole work of creation is fulfilled." 37)

We attain freedom through obedience by allowing the Spirit of God to divest us of all that is not his will. We are conformed to Christ through our obedience to our superior, the Constitutions, and to one another as we strive together to fulfill our vow. "Obedience...is most helpful in acquiring the liberty which is proper to the children of God and disposes us to give ourselves in charity" in imitation of Jesus who gave himself for us upon the cross. 38) The deepest meaning of our vow is in the example of Jesus who lived his entire life in obedience to the Father. Jesus was ever toward the Father. So, too, we are ever toward the Father because this vow roots us in Christ, through the power of the Spirit. Jesus' obedience is an expression of his love and desire for the deepest possible communion with his Father. Our vow is meant to lead us to a deeper communion. Obedience in Christian tradition is connected with the cross. The cross of Jesus was a moment of profound communion with the Father's will in loving obedience. The cross and obedience are the means by which we enter into a life of deeper communion with God by becoming like the Son. Through the vow we respond to the love which has been shown to us in Christ Jesus. Charity and communion are the two essential aspects of obedience. God's love is revealed through the obedient Christ. Our response is one of loving obedience to the gift we have received. Obedience is, then, the expression of our fidelity to the God who gave himself for us while we were yet sinners. Our desire to be in union with God is what prompts us to a whole-hearted and willing obedience. Therefore Dominican Obedience is not merely a conformity to a set of rules; it is a response to the God who has called us into communion with himself and with one another. The goal of our obedience is not perfect observance but rather communion with God, coupled with our loving efforts to create and sustain a true life of communion with one another. Obedience always puts us at the service of such a communion. This is a far greater and more demanding undertaking than becoming perfect observers of the law. This vow, which has as its end love fructifying in communion, transforms us in the inmost depths of our being and demands a free and willing surrender to the Lord, seeking most perfectly and completely to imitate the surrender of Jesus: "Father into your hands I commend my spirit." (Lk. 23:46) The goal of the vow, then, is to become one with the Father and the Son in their love who is the Person of the Holy Spirit. Obedience is the measure of our faith.

VOW OF CHASTITY

CHASTITY IN THE CHURCH

The consecration of virgins has roots in the most ancient spirituality of

the Church. It sprang up spontaneously in the early Church as certain women felt called to dedicate themselves to Christ in an exclusive way.

By the end of the 2nd century widows and virgins were clearly distinguished in the early Church, the former constituting a special class engaged in what in modern times would be called the active life, the latter living in a secluded life devoted chiefly to prayer and asceticism - the contemplative life. 39)

The Order of Widows was gradually replaced by deaconesses toward the end of the 3d century. As time passed the term "widows" was extended to include also unmarried women who had committed themselves to a life of chastity. After the 3rd century there are numerous texts attesting to the increasing importance "that 'holy virgins'... assume in the life of the Church." 40) We learn from the writings of Justin Martyr that chastity was embraced by both men and women in the early Church.

"Virginity is orientated toward contemplation" 41) and finds its source in charity. The virgin dedicated her entire life to Christ and his mission with a singleness of purpose. The contemplative dimension of the consecrated life is basically a reality of grace by which a woman enters into "the mystery of Trinitarian communion" and "opens up to the revelation and communication of the living God through Christ in the Holy Spirit." 42) St. Ambrose writes that the virgin drinks at the fountain of the Trinity. "Christ is the spouse of the Virgin." The virgin is nourished by Christ and "is watered with the streams of the Trinity." 43) Christ is the rock from which the waters flow, the brightness of glory proceeds from the Father and the stream issuing forth from the rock is the life-giving river of the Holy Spirit. 44)

The Church sees the virgin's consecration as a call inspired by the Holy Spirit and undertaken "for the sake of a more fervent love of Christ and of greater freedom in the service of their brothers and sisters." 45) This consecration also entails a following of Christ "in the spirit of the Gospels" making the virgin's whole life "a faithful witness to God's love and a convincing sign of the kingdom of heaven." 46) Our commitment to God through the vow is a "consequence which flows out of the urgent presence of the kingdom of God" to us. 47) In other words, the experience of the love of Jesus and his choice of us, and not merely an ascetic denial of sexuality, is the reason we make a vow of chastity.

...this being taken over by this kingdom must be reflected in and witnessed to the world by the quality of our love, that is, the quality of our life together: our community life. 48)

In the Church virginity has always been allied with charity, a spousal love for Jesus Christ and a freedom to love and serve our brothers and sisters wholeheartedly. The Church has given to the virgin her own title of Spouse of Christ because the virgin is "a surpassing sign of the Church's love of Christ and an eschatological image of the world to come." 49) The contemplative life is also "an anticipation of the eschatological Church immutable in its possession and contemplation." 50)

DOMINIC AND THE VOW OF CHASTITY

Dominic deeply valued his Chastity and spoke of it as he lay dying. At his

process of canonization the characteristics most frequently mentioned by the witnesses were his charity, his compassion and his virginity. His capacity for love and the deep wellsprings of his compassion are intimately connected with his virginity. Jordan of Saxony emphasized Dominic's simplicity of bearing which caused him to attract others and to be loved by them. "He could give himself wholly to all... because the delicacy of his chastity had set him completely free..." 51) The brothers in testifying to Dominic's virtue repeatedly use such descriptions as humility, gentleness, patience, kindness and quiet peacefulness. Brother Amizo of Milan adds that he was "modest and very balanced in everything he did and said." 52) The word compassion is frequently used in the testimonies. Brother Paul of Venice says of Dominic "he was...sober, loving, humble and chaste, and he was always a virgin." 53) Blessed Jordan writes:

Far more impressive and splendid than all his miracles though, were the exceptional integrity of his character and the extraordinary energy of divine zeal which carried him along...His mind was always steady and calm, except when he was stirred by a feeling of compassion and mercy... the tranquil composure of the inner man was revealed outwardly by the kindness and cheerfulness of his expression. 54)

Dominic's tranquil and compassionate love was the result of a man in possession of himself. This mastery came from his virginity, his purity of heart, that focused his whole life on Jesus Christ. This love for Christ gave Dominic an overflowing apostolic energy to love and give himself for the sake of others. With St. Paul, Dominic could cry out "the love of Christ impels us." Therefore "with the love of neighbor we come to the deep springs of his temperament." 55) The vow of chastity was one of the means by which Dominic entered into a deep love-communion with Jesus Christ and into solidarity with all of God's children. He had an instinctive trust in people which was part of his love. His "fundamental goodwill, purity, his generosity, were at the root of his kindness." 56) Dominic, because he was such a loving person, was deeply loved by others as well. The men and women of his time were drawn to him and he in turn drew them to Christ.

THE VOW OF CHASTITY IN THE NUNS' CONSTITUTIONS

By the vow of Chastity we are united to Jesus Christ. We give ourselves to Jesus through his Spirit and he responds with a love that conforms and transforms us into himself. We become sharers in his divine work of redemption. So, as we have seen, each of the vows unites us to Jesus and makes us at the same time part-takers in his redemptive work. "By our offering we become co-operators in the work of human redemption." 57) Our consecration to the Lord through chastity introduces us into a process of emptying for the sake of the kingdom of God, a process by which we "attain to a more effective purification of heart, freedom of spirit and fervor of charity." 58) The vow calls us to a tremendous love, the dimensions of which are exemplified by Christ himself. In our total commitment to God by means of this vow we enter profoundly into the heart of Christ and his self-giving love for his people. Chastity finds its fullest meaning in Christ crucified whose heart was pierced for us upon the cross. By our vow we offer our heart with Christ in order that his gift of love may be renewed throughout the ages of history. Chastity, like poverty and obedience is linked with our vocation to communion and unity. We seek through this vow, in all the circumstances of our life, to "maintain intimate communion with God by means of loving union with Christ." 59) This intimate communion is strengthened and nourished by reading the Scriptures

and eating each day at the table of the Lord. At the Eucharist we receive the Lord we seek and are united more closely to our brothers and sisters as we celebrate the great gift that gathers us together as a Church.

The Constitutions begin the explanation of chastity by presenting Dominic as its exemplar; and the text clearly connects chastity with charity. The vow is meant to expand our hearts for a greater capacity both to give love and to receive love, thus empowering us to become very loving people. The Constitutions give the example of Dominic's loving compassion and tell us that we too will find a "divine energy" in the gift of consecrated chastity to dedicate ourselves fully to the service of our brothers and sisters for the sake of the kingdom. 60) The Constitutions call chastity "an exceptional gift of grace by which we are more intimately consecrated and the more easily united with an undivided heart to God." 61) Chastity frees us for a total service of God's kingdom and enables us to focus exclusively on the work of the divine Son. We do not feel ourselves absorbed by the responsibilities of our own family and therefore "we can devote ourselves with greater energy and serenity" 62) to the mission of the Church. The Constitutions go on to say that the life of chastity is a "remarkable testimony to the kingdom of God" for which we labor, and "a sign of the future heavenly kingdom" 63) where the Church in glory will be adorned as the Bride of Christ.

POVERTY CHRISTIAN POVERTY

Poverty has always been seen as an important Christian ideal rooted in both Old and New Testament spirituality. It is a spiritual good which led to and helped one to attain a certain freedom from the desire to accumulate and to be overly dependent on material possessions. Christian poverty is not destitution but it does entail a simplicity of life, a lack of a superfluity of possessions (especially in the face of the dire poverty of so many), coupled with a responsible, generous and ready willingness to share our goods with our brothers and sisters. Christian poverty also enables us to come to a deep realization of our creatureliness and to stand before God in a true posture of humility.

...the faithful Christian conceives of himself as existing in a condition of radical and universal indigence. In himself he is mere nothingness in relation to Him who is. 64)

In the awareness of being poor before God we can truly rejoice in our total dependency on his love, by which he freely sustains us at each moment. The Christian can then perceive everything as a gift.

In the Old Testament the spirituality of the poor is typified by the "anawim"-- "the poor of Yaweh." 65) They were the poor of God who had nothing and who, through oppression and slavery, had come to realize their essential neediness. Their hope for deliverance was focused on God who alone could support their cause. The concrete object of their hope was the promised Messiah.

In the New Testament it is in Jesus that the "anawim" find the fulfillment of their hope and at the same time the pattern for truly being a poor one of God. Jesus entered into our human misery and need. He emptied himself, became weak with us, without power or support. He did not shield himself from the deepest expressions of human indigence and on the cross he plunged "into the loneli-

ness and futility that is a part of human existence." 66)

Jesus began his public ministry by proclaiming that he had come "to bring good news to the poor" (Lk. 4:18). As followers of Christ we find the primary principle or definition of poverty in the first Beatitude: "Blest are you poor; the reign of God is yours." (Lk. 6:20) 67). There is a basic element of "discontent" and yearning in the beatitudes which could be called the "manifesto" for those who are seeking the true spirit of poverty. This spirit is a necessary condition for an authentic Christian attitude toward life. As regards the future, poverty presupposes a certain insecurity. 68) Therefore poverty develops our virtue of hope for we must have child-like trust in the provident care of our Father in heaven. (Mt 6:25-34; & Lk. 21:28).

A theology of Christian poverty would include two other elements also: 1) the ability to see Christ in the poor--"the poor become a sort of sacrament of Christ "; and 2) as members of Christ we are dedicated to his work and therefore will share in the labor and privation he endured for the sake of the kingdom 69) (here poverty is related to "mission"). Poverty, then, is essential to Christianity, one cannot take the Gospel seriously without at the same time becoming poor in spirit and to some degree in material possessions also. Poverty will have many different expressions and interpretations depending on circumstances but it can never be completely lacking to true Christian commitment.

The "basic premise" for Christian poverty is our shared life "in Christ" and "our very life in Christ depends upon our preparedness to share life." 70) Our very existence as Christians is to "participate in the life of others, to share, to break down all barriers that divide." 71) We cannot live only for ourselves; we are bound together in our common faith. Traditionally, the Church of Jerusalem described in Acts (2:44-45 and 4:32-35) has been used as the model for Religious community.

MONASTIC POVERTY

The monastic ideal of poverty was drawn from this description of the Church of Jerusalem given in Acts. 73) The poverty envisioned by monasticism was not a complete absence of the means of subsistence, but it entailed the renunciation of personal ownership by solemn vow, and a common possession and use of the goods belonging to the community. The end of monastic poverty is not destitution but the ability to live an unselfish life of love through renouncing the right of ownership and control over the goods of this world and accepting a certain insecurity and lack because we can no longer exercise dominion in these matters. But more importantly, monastic poverty is meant to point toward an unselfish and generous giving of oneself and one's possessions for the common good of one's brothers or sisters. 74) Therefore we are made free to recognize God's gifts of love and become "distributors of his manifold blessings."

Another aspect of monastic poverty is what we could call the "spirituality of the desert." In monastic literature the "desert" (the withdrawal effected by enclosure), its solitude and simplicity, has been a place for men and women to get in touch with their essential poverty. It is through this desert experience that we are opened to the truth of our neediness and dependence. In the simplicity of the monastic environment we are meant to confront our poverty and accept ourselves as persons belonging to another. We are totally dependent creatures, not belonging to ourselves but to God to whom we gradually surrender our whole life. "We are

so poor that even our poverty is not our own; it belongs to the mystery of God... The ultimate word of impoverished man is: 'Not I but Thou.'" 75)

DOMINIC'S POVERTY

Dominic had a very special love for poverty. It was part of the legacy he left his sons and daughters. On his deathbed Dominic spoke of the heritage he would leave to the Order: "Have charity, guard your humility, make your treasure out of voluntary poverty." 76) Poverty was yet another expression of his overwhelming love for Jesus Christ. In asking us to make poverty our treasure he was in effect saying: prefer nothing to the love of Christ and his kingdom. St. Catherine of Siena says Dominic chose the light of learning as the special gift of his Order, "while for all that not giving up true poverty. He had that as well... he had chosen Queen poverty as his bride." 77)

Dominic was very simple in his possessions; he had no room of his own, and when he died the brothers had to borrow a decent habit in which to bury him. When traveling he accepted whatever accommodations were offered and whatever food was provided neither complaining of too much or too little. Brother Buonvisa describes Dominic as "zealous for poverty" 78) and John of Spain adds: "he had a great love of poverty and he encouraged the brethren to love it too." 79) Dominic refused a Bishopric several times, preferring to live in poverty with his brethren." 80)

He took as his ideal 'the rule of the apostles' which was associated with mendicancy and itinerancy. This itinerant mendicancy of Dominic and his followers was a real innovation. His original idea was that the Order should be faithful to the apostolic model as expressed in Mt. 10: 5-16, (cf Lk. 10:16 & Mk 6:7:13):

As you go, make this announcement: 'the reign of God is at hand! Cure the sick, raise the dead, heal the leprous, expel demons. The gift you have received, give as a gift. Provide yourselves with neither gold nor silver nor copper in your belts; no traveling bag, no change of shirt, no sandals, no walking staff. 80)

Dominic's love for poverty was a radical one and he envisioned a radical poverty for the Order also. The first members embraced mendicancy, that is, neither the individual nor the community had any possessions. The needs of the brothers were to be provided for each day by alms. Dominic's desire was "that they should, like the Apostles, be dependent on the generosity of spontaneous benefactors, rather than on even the most modest financial right!" 81) As the Order grew Dominic saw the need for a somewhat mitigated form of poverty in order to fulfill its mission of preaching.

It would be necessary for the preachers to have a place of rest, a place where they could be provided for in sickness or old age, and especially a place for instruction, for reflection, for work. 82)

Dominic chose for his Order both itinerancy and a stable community to which the Friars would return from their preaching missions. The two elements are certainly not easily compatible: "to renounce personal property but to share the common goods of the community; and at the same time live the life of a beggar while on the road preaching." 83) Dominic's choice eventually fell to "conventual mendicancy": the convent lived on what the Friars begged day by day. "Thus the convent

itself lived in the same spirit as the preacher on the road." 84) Since the foundation of the Order time has brought many conflicts and changes in trying to live this ideal of apostolic poverty. At the same time Dominic's love for poverty has remained alive in the Order and Dominicans seek constantly to renew themselves in the vision and ideals of their founder.

POVERTY IN THE NUNS' CONSTITUTIONS

Our Constitutions begin with the example of Dominic and the apostolic poverty he desired for the Order, pointing to the original spirit as the model of our own poverty. We are to embrace "voluntary poverty" and at the same time, keep before us the inspiration of Dominic, adapting it to our present circumstances. 85) We have heard the Lord's call to follow him (Mt. 19:21) and have left everything to "become poor in spirit and in fact." 86) The Constitutions go on to say that by striving to free ourselves from the dominion of riches we cooperate with the preaching of the Order which seeks to make men and women free of avarice and greed in order that they may live fully the Gospel of love.

The Constitutions present poverty in terms of the common life and holding "all things in common...for the common good of the monastery, the Order and the Church." 87) Therefore our vow of poverty places certain obligations on us both communally and individually. By our vow we promise to "have no personal possessions." 88) This promise commits us to the common sharing of goods within the community and to a real renunciation of individual possession, or accumulation of goods. The community itself, while allowed certain possessions to sustain life, is not exempt from an obligation to a very real poverty. "The amassing of goods, which do not contribute to its purpose" is considered contrary to the promise "to which we are committed as individuals and as a community." 89) The vow calls us to live simply and freely and thus give testimony that true riches "consist in the justice of God's kingdom," 90) and in sharing our goods with our brothers and sisters. We should be aware of and care for their needs rather than amass wealth and security that isolates us from that communion to which we are called as disciples of Jesus. As a community, then, we are to witness effectively to a simplicity of life, "diligent labor" and a generous sharing of what we have with those in need. 91) This attitude is expressed within our monastic community by sharing the work of the community and by the willingness to take up the various tasks that need to be done in order to sustain the life of the community. By the common use of our possessions we are exercised in an unselfish and generous attitude which teaches us to be truly free. We also have an obligation to share our goods with those outside the monastery who are poor and in need. It is through this vow that the common life is safeguarded in all its practicalities and we are given the very special means to become community-centered people. So we see again that, with this vow as with the others, poverty is not an end in itself but is directed toward our primary goal: the perfection of love and communion with and in Christ Jesus.

Our Constitutions point out certain basic elements which characterize our vow of poverty. They are as follows:

- 1) freedom "from the dominion of riches" 92)
- 2) confidence in the provident care of God and in the justice of his kingdom 93)
- 3) a real deprivation is also entailed, identifying us with the materially poor 94)
- 4) a source of "generosity towards the brethren and our neighbors"--The vow

should expand us for a generous giving of our goods, time and work for the sake of others. 95)

5) a solidarity with those who work for a living; working hard to obtain the bare necessities of life 96)

6) poverty calls us to a modest way of life and to "freely sharing our possessions with the poor" 97).

Above all else our vow of poverty gives us the opportunity to imitate the poor Christ and to follow his example by being conformed to him "who became poor for our sake so that out of his poverty we might be made rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). 98)

CONCLUSION

I would like to conclude this article in the same manner that it was begun, using Jesus' words recorded in John 17:20-23.

I do not pray for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their word, that all may be one as you, Father, are in me, and I in you; I pray that they be (one) in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. I have given them the glory you gave me that they may be one, as we are one--I living in them, you living in me--that their unity may be complete. So shall the world know that you sent me, and that you loved them as you loved me.

Jesus prayed that we should be one. We become one by being "in Christ" for the Father's glory through the power of the life-giving Spirit. Our oneness with one another is a testimony to the Father's love for us and the proof of Jesus' presence among us. God calls men and women through the Holy Spirit to dedicate themselves exclusively to the preaching of this truth by their very lives. We come together, live in common, are vowed to the mission of Christ and the work of the Church by giving ourselves to the Lord and by being consecrated to him, in order to show in a visible way the Christian call to love, unity and communion. The religious life is meant to be the witness to our present striving toward the perfection of communion and at the same time the sign of the completion of this reality when the kingdom is made visible at the return of the Lord in glory.

FOOTNOTES

Quotations from Scripture are all taken from the New American Bible. Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. Camden, New Jersey: Thomas Nelson Inc. 1971

1. Flannery, Austin, O.P. Ed. "Lumen Gentium" Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents. p. 230
2. Moloney, Francis J. Disciples and Prophets: A Biblical Model for the Religious Life. pp. 155-170. This author finds in the Prophetic movement a biblical model for religious life. He describes the prophets as men "entirely taken up with their loyalty to the covenant" (157). They are called to be a reminder to Israel of the covenant of God and to her promise "to live in covenant love with her unique God..." (158). As religious we belong to the Church and participate in her task "of bringing men into communion with one another and with their God" and are therefore prophets by living in such a way that we give testimony "that the unity among men with God, preached by the Church is not an unachievable, preached doctrine...but a lived reality" (160). This is the theme of my paper. He develops this prophetic character of each of the vows.
3. Smith, R.F. "Religious Life." New Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol XII, 1967, p. 288 The Nazarites were individuals who consecrated themselves to God, took vows of uncut hair, abstention from strong drink and the avoidance of contact with the dead. Sampson is one example from the Old Testament, and in the New Testament we have St. Paul, who took temporary vows as a Nazarite. The Rechabites were similar but united in a community. They lived a Nomadic way of life in the name of Yahweh as a protest against the assimilation of Israel to the pagan ways of the Canaanites.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Extra-Ordinary Synod of Bishops. "A Message to the People of God and the Final Report." p.17
9. op. cit. Flannery, "42, p. 942
10. Book of the Constitutions of the Nuns of the Order of Preachers. Edited Province of St. Joseph 1971. All quotations are taken from this edition. p.6, Sect. I, Chapt. I, Art. I, #2, SI
11. O'Donnell, Gabriel, O.P. "The Basic Constitutions of the Order" Monastic Search. Vol 3, Nov 1984, pp. 19-21
12. Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes. Venite Seorsum. p. 7
13. op. cit. Constitutions #2 SII
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid. #3. SI
16. Ibid. p. 7, #4, SI

17. Ibid. #3, SI
18. Truhler, K.V. "Obedience". New Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol X, 1967, p. 602
"The love of Christ, the imitation of his obedience, the practice of humility,
are at the heart of all religious life."
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid. p. 604
21. Hinnebusch, William, O.P. The History of the Dominican Order. Vol 1, p.130
22. Vicaire, M.H., O.P. St. Dominic and His Times. p.213
23. Ibid. p. 212
24. Ibid. p. 213
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid. p.211
28. Ibid. p. 212. "The promise of stability...hasd no meaning apart from that of
stability in the order. It was really a duplication of the promise of common life...
was finally identified with the vow of obedience to the superior who was the guard-
ian of the common life."
29. op. cit. Hinnebusch p. 131. cf pp. 129-133 for his presentation of Dominican
obedience. HIs thoughts are similiar to Vicaire.
30. Tugwell, Simon O.P. Ed. Early Dominicans Selected Writings. p. 22. cf p.457
for a comparison between the Praemonstratensians and primitive Dominican constitutions,
note the specific addition of dispensation as a very innovative addition.
31. op. cit. p.8, #22, Si
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid. #25, SI
34. Ibid. #22, SI
35. Ibid. #23, SI
36. Ibid. #24, SI
37. Ibid. #24, SII
38. Ibid. #24, SIII
39. op. cit. Smith, p. 289
40. Camelot, P.T. "Virginity". New Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol XIV, 1967, p. 702
41. Ibid. p.704
42. Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes. The Contemplative
Dimension of Religious Life.p. 2
43. Schaff, Philip ED. et al. " Concerning Virgins". Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers.
Vol. X. Book I pp. 366-367
44. Ibid.
45. The Roman Pontifical. The Rite of Consecration to a life of Virginity. p. 35
46. Ibid.
47. op. cit. Moloney, p. 115
48. Ibid. Moloney writes: " The original Greek (Mt. 19:12) uses a preposition (dia +
accusitive case) which indicates that Jesus was celibate 'because of' the kingdom of
heaven...It is the overwhelming power of the presence of the kingdom in his life
that led Jesus to celibacy." p. 113 We choose celibacy for the same reason. "Where
we stand as celibates flows out of exactly the same sort of experience...the over-
powering presence of a kingdom of love." p. 115
49. op. cit. Rite, p. 35
50. op. cit. Venite, p.7
51. op. cit. Vicaire, p. 391
52. op. cit. Tugwell, p. 71
53. Ibid. p. 83
54. Tugwell, Simon, O.P. ED. Jordan of Saxony: On the Beginning of the Order of
Preachers. p.26.

55. op. cit. Vicaire, p.391
56. Ibid. p. 393
57. op. cit. Constitutions. p. 9, #29, SI
58. Ibid. #29, SII
59. Ibid. #31, SI
60. Ibid. #28
61. Ibid. #29, SI
62. Ibid. #29, SII
63. Ibid. #29, SIII
64. Regamey, P.R., O.P. "Religious Poverty". New Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. XI p. 649
65. Gelin, Albert. The Poor of Yaweh. This book is an excellent presentation of the spirituality and meaning of the 'anawim', the poor of Yaweh.
66. Metz, Johannes B. Poverty of Spirit. p. 17 cf. Boniface Ramsey, "The center of Religious Poverty". Review for Religious Vol. 43, July/August, 1983. p. 54
Jesus "life is...marked by continual options in favor of poverty and the poor and he willingly chooses for himself situations in which he may experience: dependence on others, vulnerability, aloneness, being subject to scorn and non-acceptance, violence. Then at the end there is desolation..Christ seems to be abandoned not only by his friends but by the Father himself." In another place he writes "Poverty is an essential part of, or at least an essential preliminary to union with Christ who is himself understood to be poor." (underlines mine).
67. Among the principle New Testament texts quoted in regard to the Christian call to embrace the evangelical virtue of poverty was Mk. 10:17-22 (Mt. 19:16-22; Lk. 18:18-23) "Go sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven and come follow me." This was the text that inspired St. Anthony the Father of Monasticism to leave everything to follow Christ.
68. op. cit. Regamey, p. 649
69. Ibid.
70. op. cit. Moloney p. 87-89
71. Ibid. p. 88
72. Ibid.
73. Vicaire, M.H. O.P. The Apostolic Life. p.24 "It is evident that the Church of the first believers in Christ was indeed such as the monks now desire and strive to be. That nothing should be held as one's own; that there should be neither rich nor poor among them; that whatever they brought with them should be shared among those who were in need; that they should give themselves to prayer and to psalms, as well as to study and continence." (St. Jerome)
74. op. cit. Moloney p. 90 Christian life means a life of oneness; the first Christians did not get rid of their wealth and possessions but shared them. This handing over one's possessions ensured the sustenance of all the members of the community. It was sharing what one had as a sign of love for all--unifying love. Thus "the handing over of goods became the visible...sign of the deeper reality of sustaining love which is the element constituting the reality of a Christian community."
75. op. cit. p. 33
76. Ibid. p. 52
77. cf. op. cit. Tugwell p. 59 and also Vicaire p. 372-373
78. op. cit. Tugwell, p. 73
79. Ibid. p. 75
80. Ibid.
81. Ibid. p. 17
82. op. cit. Vicaire, The Apostolic Life p. 104
83. Ibid. p.108

84. Ibid. p. 109

85. op. cit. p.9, Art Iv, #32; cf proposed amendment: "Emulating the Apostles who, without gold, silver or any money, announced the kingdom of God, St. Dominic and his brethren had the intention of preaching the Gospel while begging the daily bread of the community. Thus renouncing possessions or any income for themselves, they nevertheless wished the nuns to make use of them and meant that they should procure them. At the same time they exhorted the sisters to "voluntary poverty." This was the form of apostolic poverty at the beginning of the Order which spirit should inspire us in forms adapted to the difference of times and places."

86. Ibid. #33, SI

87. Ibid. #34, SI

88. Ibid.

89. Ibid. #34, SIII

90. Ibid. #33, SII

91. Ibid. #36

92. Ibid. #33, SI

93. Ibid. #33, SII

94. Ibid.

95. Ibid.

96. Ibid. #36

97. Ibid.

98. Ibid. #33, SI

Works of Penance

Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart, O.P.
Lufkin

What comes to mind when mention of penance is made? Although over the past 17 or 18 years we have been delving into the Constitutions quite thoroughly, and previous Constitutions did not differ that much from our present Constitutions on the point of works of penance, I still conjured up ideas of hair shirts and chains when Sister Mary Catherine asked me to write this article on #67-#73 of our present Constitutions. Had she not asked me to do this, I would have missed out on something that has been very stimulating. And so, this article is just a humble explosion of excitement about some aspects of penance I have either taken for granted over the years--or have allowed to grow somewhat dormant?

Not being capable of a highly intellectual nor of even a pseudo-intellectual accomplishment, all I hope to provide here is a presentation that will whet your appetite to study more deeply this vital subject of penance. It is an invitation to carouse with me through some very heartening and encouraging facts of our faith, of the reality of our life and the promises of beatitude if we can persevere to the end no matter how often we fall short of the ideal.

What is penance? St. Thomas puts it this way; "Penance is a special virtue which labors to efface sin and its consequences, inasmuch as sin is an offence against God. Wherefore penance is a part of justice, and, inspired by charity, it commands other subordinate virtues, in particular temperance, as exemplified in fasting, abstinence, vigils.

"A distinction may be made between mortification, properly so called, which depends on the virtue of penance, and mortification in the broad sense, which depends on each virtue, inasmuch as each one rejects the vices that are contrary to it. Correctly speaking, we cannot repent of original sin, but we should labor to diminish those of its results which incline us to personal sin." 1

According to Lagrange, O.P., "The virtue of penance... ought to be inspired by the love of God, and... has for its end the destruction in us of the consequences of sin as an offense against God." 2

Penance is love trying to reveal itself through self-surrender: or as Dom Hubert van Zeller would put it, "The only kind of penitence which is worth anything is conversion. Not only conversion FROM but conversion TO." 3 This is a reflection of Joel 2:13 and our Constitution #70.

Among our limited resource material, I discovered a delightfully helpful treatise in Dom Hubert's book APPROACH TO PENANCE. Since it was written in 1957, pre-Vatican II, I did not expect such a post-Vatican II expose! However, the virtue of penance has no milestones to date it. It has never changed. We are the ones, at times, who have changed it.

Dom Hubert says things reminiscent of #67 S II and #70 such as: "The end of penance is not more penance. Thus the approach HAS to be by way of LOVE, not by way of steeling the will to toughness. Penance must have its roots in charity." 4

Pope Paul VI, in the Apostolic Constitution Paenitemini, section III, pinpoints #67 SII in this aspect of exercising "the virtue of penance, especially by faithfully fulfilling all that pertains to their life", when he states:

- a.) The Church urges first of all that everyone practise the virtue of penance by constantly attending to the duties pertaining to his state in life and by patiently enduring the trials of each day's work here on earth and the uncertainties of life that cause so much anxiety of mind. 6
- b.) Those members of the Church who are oppressed by infirmity or disease and who "suffer persecution for justice's sake", are reminded to learn to patiently unite their sufferings with Christ... 7
- c.) The obligation of self-denial should be fulfilled in a more perfect way... by those who profess the evangelical counsels in order to more closely follow the Lord in His "emptying of Himself" and in order to strive more readily and more effectively for perfect charity." 8

One facet of penance that our Constitutions do not stress nor deny but which is important to our life and well to recall often is that: "Unless prayer informs penance, and penance expresses prayer, each is incomplete." 9 It is our life breath as Dom Hubert tells us. So we are not unique in doing penance. As Christians we are obliged to do so. As religious it is even more important--as our intensity of prayers, so our intensity of penance.

On this point rests the question of active and passive penance -- #69 versus #67 S II. There should be little tension or rivalry about the matter. According to Dom Hubert and sound Church teaching, "Active penance is largely concerned with the exterior life, and needs a code of practical guidance; passive is wholly a matter of submitting to what God sends, so requires no practical guidance. ..It should not be difficult to distinguish between the kinds of penance that suggest themselves; those that are likely to be helpful stand out at once in contrast to those that are either harmful or wasteful." Or again, he says, "It is not the hardness of the work which God wants but the love which inspires the work,..If God wants hardness as well as love, he will arrange for the work to be hard. The first concern from our point of view is to make sure of love. Hardness does not cover a multitude of sins; love does. Hardness is not the bond of perfection; love is.

"In the last analysis we cannot guarantee the measure of asceticism which will atone for our sins or bring us one single step nearer to union with God... Christ atones for us; love draws us nearer to union... The closer we draw to union the more penitential we shall become.

"Passive penance is God pruning the fruitful branch so that there may be more fruit and so that the fruit may remain. Active penance is the branch shedding a twig here and a twig there so as to show God that it is in perfect agreement with his action... The main work is done ON the branch; there is little enough that can be done BY it. The primary function of the branch is to abide in the vine and be true to the principle of growth.

"So, taken all in all, passive is safer than active penance. And passive interior penance is safer than penance which is passive exterior. But at the same time it should be remembered that the first purpose of penance is to do the will of God and to give him glory; it is not to play for safety." 10

For the most part being able to faithfully submit to the passive penance of our life is a full time job. Seizing opportunities to practice active penances when they present themselves is another step forward. But seeking active penance very much requires practical guidance because unless we have been faithful and prudent in the first two steps we are likely to falter in the third.

Pope Pius XII in his Radio Addresses to Contemplative Nuns stated, "It is the conscious acceptance by the nun of the life of every day. ceaselessly repeated and joyful. It is the everlasting optimism --which is without EXCESS

and is quiet and immutable-- of our Lord who said, "But I am not alone because the Father is with me" 11 It is the nun's unwavering confidence in Him who said, "Come to me all you who are burdened and I will give you rest." 12. 13.

On the matter of external penances, (Const. #69) Pope Paul VI reminded us and all the faithful that, "In the true virtue of penance, ascetical discipline involving chastisement of the body cannot be neglected, since the whole man, body and soul must devote himself to this sacred practice in which all created things reaffirm the holiness and majesty of God.

"The need for chastisement of the body will become clearer if we consider the weakness of human nature after the sin of Adam, since the flesh struggles against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh. 15 ...the affliction of the body aims at the liberation of man, 16 who is often bound to fast, because of the disorders of concupiscence, by a kind of chain of the senses. 17 "Bodily fasting " may enable him to acquire strength, and the "dignity of man's state, which has been wounded by immoderation, may be reformed by his efforts at a medicinal moderation." 18

Numbers 70 - 73 of our Constitutions exhort us to "retain the very ancient tradition of fasting" in our lives, as handed down through successive constitutional directives and ecclesiastical law. Thus we have in our directories norms suited to the needs of our own monasteries, following Pope Paul's wish that such norms be drawn up with "prudence and zeal" and "in accordance with local conditions." 19 Indeed, that is what we have been about for almost two decades now, and what we are probably to be about until the "rapture", personal or collective! No longer will we be able to sit back and feel secure in the practices of our ancestors. Our world has changed very drastically since the 1930 Constitutions were written, and we can even see some differences between the beginning of our new Constitutions and now.

Christ is our model for penance, atonement, reconciliation. He has sustained the Church's mission to this and he ever exhorts us to it in every age according to that age and by means of the Church. And so, as Pope John Paul II re-iterated the sentiments of the Church on the matter of penance in the same way as his predecessors exhorted all of us throughout history: "We wish therefore and above all TO BE UNITED WITH HIM, who began this mission of the Church. It was He -- Jesus Christ -- who said: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; REPENT and believe in the Gospel." 20

To conclude with Dom Hubert's words; "the more nearly the soul reflects the life of Christ the more true the penance. ...this means that penance and putting on Christ are one thing." 21 We Dominican Nuns take up our cross, and bear the death of Jesus in body and soul, so that we may merit the glory of the resurrection for ourselves and others.

NOTES:

1. Summa, IIIa, q. 85, a.2 f.
2. THE THREE AGES OF THE INTERIOR LIFE, Rev. R. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P. Vol. I, Chap. XX.
3. APPROACH TO PENANCE, Dom Hubert van Zeller, Sheed and Ward, Chap 1, p. 1
4. Ibid .
6. PASTORAL CONSTITUTION ON THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD OF TODAY, No. 4;
DOGMATIC CONSTITUTION ON THE CHURCH , Nos. 34,36 and 41
7. Ibid. No. 41

- Nos. 7, 12, 13, 14 and 25.
9. APPROACH TO PENANCE, ed. cit., Chap. 1, p. 10.
 10. Ibid. Chap. II, p. 20, Chap IV., p. 48-50.
 11. Cf. John 16: 32 .
 12. Cf. Matt. 11: 28 .
 13. THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE, THREE RADIO ADDRESSES OF POPE PIUS XII TO CONTEMPLATIVE NUNS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, July 18, 25 and Aug. 2, 1958.
 14. PAENITIMINI, Pope Paul VI, L'Osservatore Romano, Feb. 18, 1966, Section II.
 15. Cf. Gal. 5: 16-17, Rom. 7: 23.
 16. Cf. Lenten Liturgy, throughout.
 17. Cf. Rom. 7: 23.
 18. Cf. Roman Missal, Collect for Thursday after Passion Sunday.
 19. PAENITIMINI, ed. cit., Section III.
 20. RECONCILIATIO ET PAENITIMINIA, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II to bishops., Introduction, Dec. 2, 1984.
 21. APPROACH TO PENANCE, ed. cit., Chap. II, p. 20. .

THE SEASON OF THERESE

Only a few days ago
it was spring,
but now the colors are warm --
the earth ripens:
The fulness of time has come.

Only a few days ago she was a child,
But now a woman
of matchless love;
of deep, gracious, delicate wisdom --
Consummate Virgin:
Consummate Bride:
The fulness of her time has come.

WORK AND THE DOMINICAN MONASTIC TRADITION

Sr. Mary of Christ

Monastery of the Angels, Los Angeles

Introduction

As nuns we are consecrated to the

...exclusive service of the kingdom in contemplative life, giving witness to the absoluteness of God in prayer, silence and unseen immolation.¹

We, the nuns of the Dominican Order, seek God,

...observing the uniform norms of the purely contemplative life, withdrawn from the world in enclosure and silence.² . . .

and working with our own hands. In order better to understand the role of work in our monastic tradition, we will examine the witness of history and ecclesiastical writing.

Our first monastery, Prouille in France, was founded by St. Dominic somewhere around 1206-1207 (scholars do not agree).³ The first sisters were converts from the Albigenses. In contrast to some members of the heretical group who were lax morally, these sisters came from the ranks of the "perfect" or were educated by them and so were trained to great austerity.

Our monastic roots lie deeper than 1206, but they come from a source which is not as well known at present. Knowing our ancient heritage can add an even greater appreciation of monastic life in our Order.

Tracing the sources

"Perfectae Caritatis", the document of the Second Vatican Council which deals with the updating and renewal of religious life, recommends that all religious return to the sources of the whole of the Christian life and the primitive inspiration of the institute.⁴ The earliest available Dominican source is the Rule of St. Sixtus.

But this is none other than the Dominican Rule of Prouille, the oldest part of which was like a sketch of the first customs of the Order.⁵

In part, this seems to be based on the testimony of a Dominican nun. She was one of the first sisters whom St. Dominic sent from Prouille to the second foundation of Dominican nuns at St. Sixtus in Rome. In 1238 she told the Pope that:

...from the 'moment of their conversion' i.e. at the beginning of regular life in their monastery, they had (in Prouille) commonly adopted as rule the rule of the Nuns of St. Sixtus in Rome.⁶

Fr. Vicaire has suggested that the reason she called it the Rule of St. Sixtus is that the Sovereign Pontiff knew it by that name. And this is how it has come down to us. Scholars guess the Rule was written about 1212.

But are we dealing with something specifically Dominican? This question is more difficult to answer than it seems. It has been argued, convincingly as far as I can see, that St. Dominic, although really the founder of the nuns in Prouille, had not originally set out to make them into an Order under his direction.⁷ The place in France where the sisters lived was in a state of war. St. Dominic's life was in constant danger. St. Dominic himself had only a few men working with him whom he had not formed into an Order yet. Perhaps the conclusive argument is the fact that an account contemporary with the beginnings of Prouille describes the nuns as the sisters who dressed like Cistercians.⁸ It would have been more reasonable for him to found an independent monastery which he could later give over to the direction of the Cistercian Order. At this period, the Cistercian rule was immensely popular as a rule for religious

women. Many monasteries had been given over to the Cistercian Order in the manner described - in fact, too many monasteries as far as the Cistercians were concerned. About the time Prouille was ready for such a step, the Cistercian General Chapter refused to accept more of them. Some sisters from Prouille, who had been trained by St. Dominic, were sent to form the community of St. Sixtus in the regular life of the Order. The second foundation of Dominican nuns at St. Sixtus used the Rule of Prouille. In other words, St. Dominic had intended to shape nuns for the Cistercian life and had succeeded in forming Dominicans.

This paper will not deal with the Cistercian aspect of the early life of the Dominican nuns. If their Rule or previous training had in any way inclined them towards a Cistercian orientation it probably had little effect. Very soon the lives of the nuns were strongly influenced by the friars of the Dominican Order, and the Rule itself underwent considerable modification over time. What we would like to discuss here is the early Dominican idea of monastic work, which as we shall see stems from a monastic tradition centuries older than that of the Cistercians.

St. Thomas used the term "manual labor" to include

...all those human occupations whereby man can lawfully gain a livelihood.⁹

In the tradition of St. Thomas and in continuity with ancient monasticism, Our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, has said that

Work is, as has been said, an obligation, that is to say, a duty on the part of man. This is true in all the many meanings of the word. Man must work both because the creator commanded it and because of his own humanity, which requires work in order to be maintained and developed.¹⁰

Here is the relevant passage from the Rule of St. Sixtus concerning work: #34. Each must work. Since idleness is the enemy of the soul, and the mother and nurse of all vices, let no sister in the cloister remain idle, but let each be always occupied as far as possible, at some good work; for she is not easily ensnared by temptation who is intent on some worthy employment. It is the Lord who said to man that he must eat of his bread by the sweat of his brow. And the Apostle adds that he who does not work ought not to eat. And the prophet before him, "You shall eat from the toil of your hands and that will be good for you."

So with the exception of the hours which the Sisters ought to consecrate to prayer, to reading, to the preparation of the Office and chant, or to study, they should devote themselves to some manual labor as shall be judged good by the Prioress.¹¹

In the early days

In the early years of the Order, monastic work also included routine sewing, repairing of habits, embroidery, and even the copying of books.¹²

A fourteenth century manuscript gives evidence that the nuns in Prouille worked in earnest:

...according to the ancient custom and the formal order of our father St. Dominic fifteen quintals of wool were passed out among the sisters to be spun and woven when the sisters were not otherwise engaged.¹³

Fifteen quintals has been estimated at about two tons. In March 1207 there were eleven or twelve sisters in Prouille. That was a lot of work.

An odd saying

In the passage already quoted from the Rule of St. Sixtus there is an odd saying. It is very hard to trace the origin of the statement that "idleness is the enemy of the soul, and the mother and nurse of all vices." Idleness is called the enemy of the soul by St. Benedict.¹⁴ Many folk proverbs tell of the mischief it makes. The quotation remains rather odd, however. No one seemed to regard idleness as the root of all vices at the time when the Rule was written. St. Thomas describes pride as being at the root of other vices "because that which gives sin its gravity is essential to pride."¹⁵ He seems never to have heard of idleness used in this way. It would have been important for him to have corrected this impression if he had. Although Scripture condemns idleness as a great source of evil, never, as far as I can see, is it described as the mother and nurse of vices.¹⁶ It might be a folk proverb, it is hard to tell.

Our old Constitutions attribute this saying to Gregory IX.¹⁷ But this is none other than Cardinal Hugolino, a fast friend of St. Dominic. Since they met for the first time in 1215 and St. Dominic died in 1221, six years before the Cardinal became Pope, this seems rather doubtful. It is far more likely that it was the tirelessly talkative Saint who talked Cardinal Hugolino into it. St. Dominic had spent an entire night arguing a heretical innkeeper out of heresy; he talked a monastery of upperclass but worldly nuns into a strict way of life, and this in spite of their relatives who described him as a "coarse and offensive nobody."¹⁸ When St. Dominic met Cardinal Hugolino, he had already had the governance of a monastery of nuns for several years. Moreover, he had written at least the first draft of his Rule for them. Proverb or not, it seems that the idea really was St. Dominic's. Now to find out what he meant.

Surely, the first sisters of Prouille who were converts from the extremely rigorous branch of the Albigensian heresy did not need constant occupation to keep them out of serious moral trouble. That, however, is a point worth mentioning. One place that this constant occupation is recommended to keep a person from sin is Moral Theology. Work is regarded as especially useful to help a person with the habit of sin to break from it. ¹⁹ Another place where idleness is considered the fundamental adversary is the monastic "wisdom literature" of the early centuries of Christianity. But would St. Dominic have known about it? He certainly would.

When he was a canon at Osma, St. Dominic read and reread the Conferences of the Fathers by John Cassian.²⁰ Blessed Jordan, the second Master General of the Dominican Order, writes that:

The paths of salvation outlined therein he carefully studied and tried to imitate with all the strength of his soul. Along with the help of grace, this book refined the purity of his conscience, intensified the light of his contemplation, and raised him to a high level of perfection.²¹

John Cassian wrote about 395 from France. The purpose of his books was to explain the Syrio-Egyptian monastic tradition to the Christian west. While we have direct evidence that St. Dominic knew the Conferences, we do not know for sure whether he knew the Institutes of John Cassian. This was sort of a companion volume which was frequently bound together with the Conferences. They suppose much the same information concerning the state of the monastic life in Egypt and the teachings of the desert monks. The Institutes deal more with the day to day life of the monks with some specific spiritual teachings; the Conferences deal with their spiritual teachings more directly. Since the kind of information which will be most useful in the next section of this paper is more easily found in the Institutes, that book will be quoted more frequently. The basic information they contain is common to both. Cassian's writings must

constitute St. Dominic's most important contact with the older monastic tradition. And this is the deepest source of the monastic life in the Dominican Order.

Light from the past

We have been urged to go back to the sources of the religious life in our Order. Here we will try to do it by relating our present Constitutions to this literature as it has been collected by John Cassian. At the same time it can be related to other ecclesiastical writers. By this means we can enrich our understanding of the past and gain a greater perspective on the history of monasticism. In so doing we can begin to understand monastic work from St. Dominic's point of view. At the very conclusion we shall find out why monks would find idleness "the mother and nurse of vices".

Human nature has suffered little change during the past several centuries. As keen observers of human behavior, the desert monks depended less on formal theology and more on their experience and upon Scripture when describing monastic life. Virtues and vices stood out more clearly in the stark environment of the desert monasteries. The Fathers, as they are called, gave advice to young monks on the monastic life based on these sources.

Thoroughly steeped in Sacred Scripture, the monks attempted to live the "apostolic way of life" literally. And that is what they called it.

The monks learned much of Scripture by heart and constantly meditated on it. A text of Scripture would naturally lead a monk to think of a whole chain of interrelated passages. This made their "wisdom literature" very rich in content. The term "wisdom literature" is put in quotes, since the monastic teaching was mostly an oral tradition although put into writing by persons such as Cassian and others.

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we urge you to keep away from any of the brothers who refuses to work or to live according to the tradition we passed on to you. (II Thess. 3:6)²²

In this and subsequent verses the Apostle describes the way in which Christians ought to work. Accordingly, this is how the monks described their work. The Apostle urged Christians to work in imitation of the Apostles who were not idle, did not eat at others' expense, worked night and day and worked to make themselves an example to others. St. Paul said do not "Let any one have food if he refused to do any work" (II Thess. 3:10) and that each should work quietly and never grow tired of doing what is right. Book X, Chapter XXVII of the Institutes is a long analysis of St. Paul's exhortations to work.

Frequently one encounters features found in the Egyptian monasteries which are similar to those found in the modern Church. Many such features will be observed during the course of this paper.

At Prouille, the sisters were to work unless they were otherwise occupied. Nor was it any different in the desert of Egypt. The monk does not
...presume even to leave his cell throughout the whole day, or to forsake the work which he is wont to carry out in it, except when he happens to be called out for the performance of some necessary duty.²³

And in the desert this was done expressly because the Apostle commanded it.²⁴

By experience each monk found that

...he will be proved to be more ardent in purity of heart for spiritual progress and knowledge of divine things in proportion as he

is more earnest in this zeal for obedience and work.²⁵
This must be true since man is composed of body and soul. What is done outwardly shapes the person inwardly.

How you should wish that everything within you should be regulated by obedience. Seeking God's will—not yours.
See Him, always in your superiors and the duties they impose.
Obedience is a prayer, sacrifice is a prayer, working a prayer.²⁶

Curiously, these observations by our Mother Foundress which date somewhere early in this century are much like those Pope John Paul II recently addressed to religious:

The Church in Christ's own name took possession one day of all your powers of living and loving. It was your monastic profession. Renew it often.²⁷

In faith you have pronounced "yes" for everything and for always.²⁸
By the work of your hands and by your intellectual endeavors, you show the close relationship between work and prayer.²⁹

He continues to remark that it also joins us in solidarity with our brothers and sisters throughout the world. As our Constitutions put it:
Since poverty imposes hard work on so many men to obtain the bare necessities of life, the sisters must give an effective corporate witness to the world by diligent labor, a modest way of life and by freely sharing their often modest possessions with the poor.³⁰

The same attitude prevailed in the desert of Egypt. In our less literal age we do not reduce our diet to a bare minimum. Two biscuits a day was the standard ration of the monks. In obedience to Scripture, the monks gathered immense resources to "feed others, especially areas suffering from famine and barrenness"³¹ In doing this they believed that they were making a reasonable sacrifice to the Lord.

Today we insist on some relaxation from the monastic routine. This is reflected in our Constitutions where we read that
...the nuns should be free from all work for a certain number of days of the year...³²

This is but a restatement of a principle discovered centuries earlier. On Sundays, the monks would lessen the difficulty of the routine and be more generous in the amount and sort of food allowed. It was not a great deal, ...yet some difference is made, and an indulgence over other times seems to be granted to the brethren out of reverence for the Lord's resurrection; and this seems to lighten the observance throughout all the weeks.³³

In like manner, the monks of the desert were aware that a certain balance was necessary in monastic life. It is true, however, that they more literally fulfilled the Apostle's command "never grow tired of doing what is right (II Thess. 3:13)" by working into the night in order to keep awake. But all this work they did so that by

...practicing equally the virtues of the body and the soul, they balance what is due to the outer and what is due to the inner man.³⁴
We, too should
...not overlook the value of work for the maintenance of mental and bodily health.³⁵

Work should develop the personalities of those who engage in it.³⁶ Yet as our present Holy Father says

...in spite of all this toil, in a sense, because of it - work is a good thing for man... It is not only good in the sense that it is useful or something to enjoy, it is good as being something worthy, that is to say, something that corresponds to man's dignity and increases it.³⁷

Our Constitutions describe work as a "more common form of asceticism."³⁸ St. Thomas agrees, stating that work is

...directed to the curbing of the concupiscence as it is a means of afflicting the body.³⁹

But traditionally Dominicans have not over stressed this point by regarding work as an odious burden or a cross. In one of his many delightful footnotes, Fr. Tugwell remarks:

It is interesting to note in Pecham's reply to Kilwarby's letter to Dominican novices how the Franciscan instinctively takes 'toil' (laborare) to refer to the hardships and austerities of life, whereas the Dominican instinctively applies it (as here) to working at something useful.⁴⁰

Work begets love in cooperation, as our Constitutions note.⁴¹ The monks in the time of Cassian found things no different:

And they hasten to fulfill these duties with a zeal and humility such as no slave bestows on his service... they actually rise at night and ...secretly anticipating them try to finish those duties these others would have to do.⁴²

St. Paul states

Whatever your work is, put your heart into it as if it were for the Lord and not for men.(Col.3:23)

Egyptian monks tried to fulfill this in every respect they could imagine. The ancient monastic garb was specially made to be girt up so that the monks ...are made active and ready for all kinds of work, endeavouring with all their might to fulfill the Apostle's charge... "If any will not work, neither let him eat" (Acts 20:34).⁴³

Dominicans notice this in each other too. Sr. Agnes of Ochenstein who lived in the monastery of Unterlinden (15th Cent.) is remembered as one who worked "humbly, devotedly and energetically."⁴⁴ So we too must give ourselves to our work with all our powers of mind and heart.⁴⁵

The desert Fathers found that work was necessary for the pursuit of essential monastic virtues. Abbot Isaac related that every monks' aim and the "perfection of his heart" was to try to acquire a tranquil mind and perpetual purity. In order to do this the monks practiced all their labours and exercised contrition of spirit. "And there is between these two a sort of reciprocal and inseparable union."⁴⁶ Work should lead to humility of heart as well.⁴⁷ Without humility and purity of heart the end of the monastic life cannot be achieved. This must certainly have been one of the reasons St. Dominic stressed work for the sisters, and a very positive one.⁴⁸

"The mother and nurse of all vices"

Many vices are mentioned in Cassian as stemming from idleness in the monastic life. They are discussed at length in Book X of the Institutes and in other places as well.

There is, however, one principal vice, - one would almost say a spiritual disease, which comes from idleness. This is the affliction of monks, and we would add of professional religious. It is accidie which has sometimes been described as spiritual sloth⁴⁹ or boredom with routine. This surely must be the

temptation that St.Dominic wanted his sisters to avoid. Cassian's description is biting and incisive:

And when this has taken possession of some unhappy soul, it produces dislike of the place, disgust with the cell, and disdain and contempt with the brethren who dwell with him or at a little distance, as if they were careless or unspiritual. It also makes a man lazy and sluggish about all manner of work which has to be done within the enclosure of his dormitory. It does not suffer him to stay in his cell, or to take any pains about reading, and he often groans because he can do no good while he stays there, and complains and sighs because he can bear no spiritual fruit as long as he is joined to that society... He cries up distant monasteries and those which are a long way off, and describes such places as more profitable and better suited for salvation... On the other hand, he says that everything about him is rough, and that there is nothing edifying among the brethren who are stopping there... Lastly he fancies that he will never be well while he stops in that place, unless he leaves his cell (in which he is sure to die if he stays any longer) and takes himself off from thence as quickly as possible. ...and so a kind of unreasonable confusion takes possession of him like some foul darkness, and makes him idle and useless for every spiritual work...⁵⁰ For in truth the soul which is wounded by the shaft of this passion does sleep, as regards all contemplation of the virtues and insight of the spiritual senses.⁵¹...And whenever it begins in any degree to overcome anyone, it makes him restless and a wanderer, and indolent in the matter of all kinds of work. ... For the mind of the idler is thus little by little ensnared by dangerous occupations, so that just as if it were bound by the coils of a serpent, it can never disentangle itself again and return to the perfection of its former profession.⁵²

And these conditions, Cassian continues, come solely from leisure. The discussion of accidie continues by describing the way St. Paul treated the disease. He first urged them to be quiet, then to go about their business, and then to go to work.⁵³

And so it was among the monks of Egypt and must be among us.

This should be your perspective of faith and ecclesial joy for every day and every action of yours: your prayer and vigils, your praise in the Divine Office, your life in your cell or at work, your mortifications, whether in your rules or voluntary, your sickness or suffering, all should be joined to the Sacrifice of Christ. For him, with him and in him, you will be an offering of praise and sanctification for the world.⁵⁴

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TOWARD A MONASTIC SPIRITUALITY OF WORK

Sister Maria Rose, O.P.
Summit

There has been a great amount of study on the subject of work. The issue of work can be a thorny one; it is also a blessing since we find its source in sacred scripture, in the basic Christian truths and in the wisdom taught by monastic tradition.

Monastic work icons the activity of the creative Word of God. This iconic approach to work enables us to enter into the core of monastic spirituality, Christ and his work of the gospel. We have chosen 'image' or 'icon' with its simple and vigorous line, exquisite colors and technical refinement, to represent human work being transformed by faith, hope and love. Lumen Gentium 36 reminds us that work, united to prayer, unfolds the deepest meaning and value of creation and its orientation to divine praise. In this paper, we will try to highlight the fact that a right attitude towards work is the key to the whole issue of 'unceasing prayer'. A few references to our monastic heritage will serve as a touchstone for discernment. We are also going to adapt the documents issued by the Popes and by the Second Vatican Council.

The Dominican nun at work is a student of the gospel. The human and the theological dimensions of LCM 112 will come to the fore in this essay:

Fulfilling the design of the Creator
and joyfully associating themselves with the work of redemption,
the sisters should freely give themselves to work
with all the powers of mind and heart
and with the gifts of nature and grace. (1)

IMAGING THE WORD IN CREATION

Human work is an image or icon of the creative Word of God as we read in Genesis 1:1-31. The Greek fathers call it 'synergy', man working with God's creative power whereby he uses his talents and skills with hope and enthusiasm to bring the universe into fulfillment. In this context, work becomes the locus through which God's presence is experienced in the world as acting love.

The nuns at work participate in the mystery of creation whereby they gain dominion over the earth and achieve fullness of life in God. The phrase 'subdue the earth' has an immense scope. It embraces all the resources that the visible world contains and which, through the prayer and work of the nuns, can be used and developed for the goals of monastic life. The biblical text, therefore, never ceases to be relevant. The nuns' earth is their cloister. By extension, it can be understood as the outside world insofar as this is within the range of their influence and of their striving to live the contemplative life. (2)

The term 'subdue the earth' applies to the officials of the monastery who carry the burden of responsibilities and of decisions. It is also familiar to every sister in the community. The nun at work is, to some extent, a creator be she administrator, gardener, cook, writer, seamstress or musician. She leaves her imprint on her work, at the same time developing her powers of creativity and concentration. (3)

Through their various offices and duties, the nuns relate themselves and the totality of things around them to God who is Lord and creator of all. (4) A concrete example of this is the Summit Choirbook compiled and published by our nuns. This hymnal is an historical and liturgical incarnation of the works of various generations in the field of music and of worship. Through this project, the editor has contributed to the wealth of our Christian prayer tradition and to the common good realized together with hymnologists all over the world. In the same way, a research writer depends on God, the giver of all resources, and on other human beings - authors, scholars, professors, editors - to whose previous works she owes the increased potential of her own knowledge and skills. (5)

Every nun in the community is a sharer in the building up of the future of those who will come after her in the monastic life. Work makes the upkeep of community possible. Many of our tasks have ceased to be mainly manual, but are accomplished with the aid of machinery. Modern electronic technology is the fruit of the human intellect and labor. Machines are intended to facilitate and to perfect our work; they should not, however, supplant our aptitudes and responsibility. The words 'subdue the earth', therefore, include the nuns' working relationship with the field of technology.

Part of the asceticism of work in the monastic life lies in the planning of different types and methods of work according to the horarium, giving time and space for prayer, study, lectio, rest and recreation. The maintenance of the community and its contemplative orientation to seek God are the important terms of reference for the planning and distribution of work to the sisters. The preparation of food and clothing should not swallow up half of the day's timetable. The life of nature should not absorb that of the spirit. Too much preoccupation with bread for the table can lead to lack of spiritual food (Lk. 12:16-29). Praise and worship and, among other things, the fitting observance of Sundays and holydays should be the primary concerns of a monastic contemplative community. (6)

The same encyclical states that the contemplative images God both in work and in leisure (V.25.114; cf. Gen. 2:2-3). God still works with creative power by sustaining the universe. He works with salvific power in the hearts of those whom he calls to union with himself. The spirituality of work consists in external effort, in leisure, and in day-to-day transformation in Christ in preparation for final union with God. This is a reminiscence on John Paul II's address to the contemplative nuns in Lisieux, France in June 2, 1980. He exhorted them

to dedicate themselves and to sacrifice themselves more and more, without ever seeking to know how God uses their collaboration.

Whereas at the basis of every action, there is a purpose and therefore a finitude or limitation, the gratuitousness of love is at the root of contemplative fruitfulness.

IMAGING THE WORD IN THE WORK OF REDEMPTION

The iconic approach to work extends to the saving Word of God in the world. After the fall, work became oppressive and a source of discord because it was robbed of its transcendent value. We read in Genesis 3:17-19 that suffering and death were the reward for human labor. In the redeemed state, we now work in a reconciled creation (Amos 9:13-15). Through the example of Christ, work continues to be the law of the new dispensation as expressed in John 5:17, "My Father is working still and I am working." The new creation is built on Christ and the apostles and will be completed on the eighth day.

Christ proclaimed and fulfilled the word of eternal wisdom through the work of the gospel. He preached the kingdom of God in parables using work-images: the farmer who planted the vineyard (Mk. 12:1-12), the householder (Mt. 13:52), the shepherd and his flock (Jn. 10:1-16), the faithful servant (Mt. 24:45), the physician (Lk. 4:23), the prudent administrator (Lk. 16:1-8), the fisherman (Mt. 13:47-50), the reaper (Jn. 1:35-38), the merchant (Mt. 13:45) and the scholar (Mt. 13:52).

Labor is not merely an ascetical observance designed to gain merits for one's soul and for others. It is a participation in the mystery of Christ, a concrete expression of the Incarnation in our lives. The nun finds and accepts the cross in her work in the same spirit of redemption in which Christ accepted his cross for our sake. In work, thanks to the light of the resurrection, we find a glimmer of the 'new life, the hope of the new heaven and the new earth' described in 2 Peter 3:13. (7)

Work attitudes and values will affect for good or ill, God's saving plan in human history. In God's plan, work is his gift to us; it is for the service of God in one another and for the service of one another in God. Monastic work is a sacrifice which we offer to God in joy and pain for the upbuilding of community unto the measure of the perfect man, Christ. (8) The redemptive aspect of work performed in the cloister is clearly stated by John Paul II in his address to the nuns in Kenya in May 7, 1980:

In your lives of material detachment and in the earnest work that you perform each day, you show your solidarity with the whole Church to whose service you are called. And through your prayers and the fruitfulness of your spiritual life, you are in a position to contribute effectively to the great cause of justice and peace and to human progress.

LOVE FREES US FOR SELF GIVING

Freedom is a great gift and the best use of freedom is love, which takes concrete form in self-giving. For this freedom, Christ has set us free and even continues to set us free (Gal. 5:1, 13). The most free person in the community is not the one who can perform the greatest number of tasks, but rather the one who gives the most of herself without compulsion. The gift of self, then, is beyond and above talents and skills. We get further insight from the comment made by Thomas Merton on this point. According to Merton,

he who attempts to act and do things for others without deepening his own self-understanding, freedom and capacity for love, will not have anything to give to others. Such a person will communicate nothing but his own obsessions, his aggressivity, his ego-centered ambitions and his delusions about ends and means. (9)

The contemplative works for God, with God and in the community. It is in the community that we discover the demands and claims that God has on us. St. Gregory the Great, in his Sermon on the Gospels 9.7, is keenly aware of the communal aspect of self-giving:

He who has a talent, let him not hide it, he who has much to share, let him give generously, he who has art and skill, let him do his best to employ them as the steward of God's providence for the benefit of others. (10)

Every able-bodied person has the inherent right and obligation to work for the common good. She should also be allowed to exercise personal initiative in the discharge of her duties. The Sisters must be assigned work that is most consonant with the monastic way of life and best estimated to develop in them interior freedom and a sense of responsibility. (11) In Colossians 3:23-24, St. Paul encourages us, "Whatever your task, work heartily as serving the Lord and not men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward." St. Basil stressed this in his Rule for monks:

The monk is to go to his work with readiness, enthusiasm and full attention. He is to strive to work conscientiously because he knows that his true and ever-present overseer is none other than the Lord himself. (12)

A servile attitude towards work degrades the human person. One who is free is never dominated by her work. 'Dominion' in Genesis 1:28 is to be understood as a process by which the human person dominates her work. Whether work is done individually or shared with others, it is a free and personal act, engaging the whole person to whom the Word of God is being directed every moment. The gospel message bears many points which touch on human work. An inner effort on the part of the human spirit, guided by faith, hope and love, is required so that through these points, the work of each sister may be incorporated in God's saving plan for the world. (13)

WITH ALL THE POWERS OF MIND AND HEART

Intelligent and conscientious work combines the Christian's two-fold vocation to contemplation and action. It engages the body, the mind, the heart and the highest point of the spirit since it is directed to God who is accessible in Jesus. Work can become a wordless prayer of praise, of thanksgiving and intercession. The nun at work is present to God in a spirit of dependence; her very work becomes a relationship of love with Christ.

How did the early monks combine work and prayer with all the powers of mind and heart? In Cassian's Book of the Institutes II.3, we read that the early monks continued their meditation in their cells after the divine service, while working quietly with their hands. Everyone did the work assigned to him while repeating a psalm verse or scriptural passage through which both mind and heart were taken up in unceasing prayer.

Abba Palamon trained Pachomius to meditation on Scriptures while working quietly. Both master and disciple practised the asceticism together and gave time to prayer. Their work consisted in spinning and weaving hair sacks, toiling not only for themselves but also remembering the poor, as the Apostle says. (14)

To harmonize prayer and work, St. Basil suggests seeking in the work itself motives to praise and thank God and to invoke his help, since work is God's gift to man. The monk is praising God and is praying constantly through the responsible use of time, talents, tools, materials and human energy. In this way, the contemplative is attuned to the reality that it is God who gives him strength, knowledge and insight to fulfill his work. (15)

The nun is called to contemplation in her very work. First, she must visualize the form which will become a loaf of bread, a layered cake, a string of rosary beads, an essay, a hymn or a painted icon. When her work is finished, she can enjoy it, know and see that it is good. A seamstress enters into a mental image before she starts working on a set of vestments. While working, she uses her imagination and ingenuity and sees the image of the liturgical piece of art until it is finished. (16) The mystery of planning a daily menu is no different, with due proportion of course, from that of the scientist who, after concentrating on all his facts, arrives at a synthesis.

WITH THE GIFTS OF NATURE AND GRACE

The Jewish patriarchs tended flocks. The most respected Greek philosophers were cobblers and some earned their living as scribes. Jesus did not disdain to spend a great part of his life as a carpenter (Mk. 6:3). St. Paul was a tent-maker when he was not preaching the gospel.

In Antonian monachism, the works were of a sedentary kind such as linen-weaving and basket-making which can be done in the cell. This type of work was interspersed with Scripture reading and meditation. The Pachomian

monasteries, on the other hand, were active communities of various trades and crafts. Palladius gives an account of Pachomian monks working in the fields and gardens, plying various trades as bakers, smiths, carpenters, fullers, tanners, shoemakers, tailors, camel drivers and boatmen. The daily horarium was divided between church services, scripture reading, meditation and work. Work pressures were by no means sufficient cause to neglect the synaxis, the divine service and the common meals. (17)

In the Basilian model, the time was divided between prayer, work and lectio divina. St. Basil discouraged excessive bodily penances and fasting. Instead, he initiated the principle that work is of greater value than self-inflicted austerities. The Basilian monks engaged in farming, ploughing, vine-dressing, wood-drawing, stone-hewing, planting and draining. (18)

The term 'manual labor' derives from the hand as the organ of organs. St. Augustine exhorts monks and nuns to make their living through bodily work. In Thomistic thought, physical labor means all kinds of work, including preaching, writing and teaching. Simon Tugwell describes the life of the early nuns of our Order; "Their observance is remarkable, they kept strict silence and perpetual enclosure, they work with their hands to avoid laziness and idleness, and so they work out their salvation." (19)

Most of us are familiar with the fact that in St. Benedict's ideal, the most important and traditional work is the praise of God or the Divine Office. The early Benedictines lived in community, serving God by the daily duties in choir, in farm and garden, in kitchen and bakery and in the workshops, chanting, praying, working, reading and meditating according to the Rule and under obedience to the Abbot. Chapter 48 of the Benedictine rule states that "they are truly monks who live by the labor of their hands as did the Fathers and the apostles." To this Benedict adds, "yet all things are to be done with moderation on account of the fainthearted." (20)

The exaggerated mystique of manual labor, especially farming, is very characteristic of the rusticity of primitive monasticism which tends to overlook the element of study and culture. Some people tend to set manual and intellectual work in opposition, thus creating a hierarchy of works. Categories limit a person in obedience instead of freeing her. (21) The early Dominican nuns performed manual labor. Community projects were done together in the workroom. The sisters did routine sewing such as the making of new habits and repairing old clothes. They were also skilled in embroidery. Silence was observed during work while one of the nuns read aloud from the Rule, the Constitutions or a spiritual book. Work was considered consecrated labor, complementing the liturgical worship in choir.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, more nuns engaged in intellectual activity. They knew Latin and some spoke the language fluently. Copying and illuminating books for choir and library fitted readily into the monastic way of life. The sisters also bound most of their books which were intended for private and refectory reading. John Dominici, one of the leaders of the Dominican reform in Italy, encouraged the nuns to do miniature painting. He himself was a gifted miniaturist and under his influence, the art flourished in the reformed monasteries. (22)

Can study serve as a modern equivalent for the early forms of monastic work? Cuthbert Butler gives an incisive comment on this issue. He thinks that

there probably never has been such a thing as a monastery of learned nuns. Such nuns can be singled out everywhere from their cloisters as exceptions. To devote oneself wholeheartedly to intellectual work within the context of the monastic life would require a special aptitude, a long and conscientious training. The person must have intellectual gifts as well as a special temper of mind and character. For those nuns who have these qualifications, study, writing and research work, could probably be good substitutes for the traditional manual labor. First of all, it should be work, essentially oriented to contemplative life and contributive to human progress. Two hours of lectio divina everyday will still be reading and study, but it will not be substitute for work in the monastic sense. Writing an essay occasionally for publication may be considered a cultural activity or a suitable hobby, but it will not be monastic work. To be considered work, study must be done with effort, patience, thoroughness and scholarship in the best sense. Study and writing taken up as work entails comparison and translation of original sources, of different texts, versions and redactions. It means working among archives, transcribing documents and collating manuscripts. This demands a great amount of time, exacting discipline and concentration. Monastic work of this kind has restrictions because it has to be done within the enclosure and it should be compatible with the tenor of monastic life. Study as work, cannot be the all-absorbing interest of a nun's life with a view to the intensive writing of books, articles or bibliographical indices. This would mean extensive working hours, contacts with outside libraries and the purchase of expensive manuscripts and source materials. (23) To this we may add the necessity of inter-library loans and the procurement of photostatic copies.

The dignity and value of work depends on the person who does the work and the loving attention she puts into it. Although work can be classified and rated, we do not differentiate people according to classes nor according to the type of work they do. There are those who have a greater capacity for physical labor. There are some who are more suited to mental work. The ideal is to find the balance and harmony between both in a person.

Talents are easily discernible in active works of love. The nun cultivates her natural and spiritual gifts and she goes outside of herself and beyond herself in her work. Rightly understood, this type of growth is of greater value than any external riches that can be gained. (24) In his Letter 130.16 and 31. St. Augustine clearly delineates this theme by stating that

each person must do what she can. If one sister is not capable of as much as another, then she can still attain it in the other who is more able. One must love and esteem in the other the gifts and skills which she herself does not possess. Thus, the person

with lesser talents should not impede the person with more, nor should those who are more gifted put pressure on others who are less capable. You have to render an account of yourself to God alone. The only thing that you owe to one another is mutual and abiding love.

It is a challenge to work within the limitations of time, materials and skills. Time-saving and energy-saving devices provide relief from daily pressures of work. Machines, however, are subordinate to human effort. The Church teaches the primacy of the human person over things and production. The Popes warn us against treating the person as a mere instrument of production, a cog in the wheel. This is a reversal of basic Christian values laid down in sacred scripture. (25)

The monastic schedule must make provision for the overall programming of work by which the prayer-life of the nuns is fostered and fulfilled. Work and study projects should be organized within the context of Dominican monastic life. The general concern does not weigh on the Prioress and delegated officials alone; it includes the initiatives of individual nuns in a balanced coordination. Good programming of work should maintain and establish the right proportion between the various offices, charges and domestic chores in accordance with the capacities of the sisters and the size of the community. The common good takes into consideration all the essential elements of monastic life: obedience, poverty, interpersonal relationships, liturgy, private prayer, study, lectio, recreation, sufficient rest and sleep, enclosure and silence. (26)

As a conclusion, we may well ask ourselves which of our works and projects are truly for the common good and which are primarily for the fulfillment of the busy self, the unconverted ego? Prayer enables us to discern the chaff from the wheat. Work united to prayer requires nothing less than the complete death of the false self. It is an activity of conversion whereby one discovers who she is - her poverty, her dependence and her vulnerability.

Through service, the community becomes part of the nun's unceasing prayer. This attitude makes work restful and trustful in the Lord. That is why St. Augustine could say in truth that the lover feels no labor, but all labor is difficult for one who loves not. In union with the cross of Christ in whose image we are newly created, the burden of work and the sting of death are endowed with power and dignity. Work, united to prayer, is now a freedom which prepares us for entry into God's repose.

NOTES

- (1) Gaudium et Spes 67; cf. LCM 24 SIII, 25 SII, 114 SII, 126 SII
- (2) John Paul II, Laborem Exercens II.4.14
- (3) Paul VI, Populorum Progressio I.27
- (4) Gaudium et Spes 64. This is also reminiscent of Teilhard de Chardin's theory of energies converging in Christ, the Omega point of creation.
- (5) A paraphrase of Laborem Exercens II.10.44
- (6) II.10.42 of the same encyclical deftly stresses this point; cf. LCM 113 SI
- (7) This is resonant of Lk. 5:1-11; Jn. 21:1-6; Rom. 8:18-25; Heb. 3:7-11
- (8) Ade de Bethune, Work, p. 7; cf. Col. 1:24
- (9) Contemplation in a World of Action. New York: Image Books, 1973. p. 164
- (10) The typical texts are in Jn. 6:27-29; Col. 3:23-4:1; I Cor. 10:31-33; Ps. 131:3-5; I Cor. 3:5-17; Ps. 126; Acts 18:3; Eph. 4:28
- (11) See LCM 25 SII; cf. John XXIII, Pacem in Terris I.18; Mater et Magistra II.84; cf. Pius XII, Radio Message, Pentecost 1941
- (12) St. Basil, The Long Rules 41; cf. LCM 115
- (13) Laborem Exercens V.24.110; cf. Basic Constitution SV
- (14) St. Pachomius, Pachomian Koinonia Vol. I, pp. 33, 302
- (15) The Long Rules 37.3; See Basil Pennington, "Working with St. Basil" in Word and Spirit, Vol. I pp. 86-94
- (16) Work, pp. 18-20
- (17) Palladius, The Lausiaca History, pp. 92-95
- (18) The Long Rules 38-41 treat of the different types of work in primitive monasticism.
- (19) Early Dominicans, pp. 389-390; See St. Augustine, De Opere Monachorum 17.20: Cf. S.Th. II-II Q. 187 a.3
- (20) Cuthbert Butler, Benedictine Monachism, p. 32; cf. RB 1980, pp. 250-251
- (21) Laborem Exercens V.27.131; cf. LCM 24 SIII

- (22) William A. Hinnebusch. The History of the Dominican Order. pp. 384-386
- (23) Benedictine Monachism. p. 377
- (24) Gaudium et Spes 35; cf. Sponsa Christi VIII.3.2; cf. LCM 111
- (25) Laborem Exercens II.7.29; III.11.56; III.15.71
- (26) The Long Rules 38; here Basil speaks of eutaxia or the right ordering of things in the community; cf. De Opere Monachorum treats of the common good; the scriptural texts alluded to are I Cor. 13;15 and 2 Cor. 6:10

Who Set the Twinkling Stars on High?

Who set the twinkling stars on high,
To shine throughout the night?
Who paints the dawn of morning sky
In shades of glowing light?

Who made the sky so fair and blue,
Or sunset's crimson glow?
Who made the trees bloom in the spring?
Who made the wild flowers grow?

Who made the lovely shades of Fall,
When wheat fields turn to gold?
Who made the shining flakes of snow,
Or frost, or winter cold?

Who made the wind so softly sigh?
Who made the birds to sing?
Who made the music in our voice,
Or flute, or violin?

Oh, who but Thou, Creation's Lord.
Whose wisdom we adore:
And raise our voice in praise and song,
To thank Thee evermore.

Sister Mary Rose Dominic of Jesus, O.P.
SUMMIT



SPIRITUAL INITIATION AND ONGOING DEVELOPMENT

Sister Maria of the Holy Eucharist, O.P.
Monastery of the Mother of God
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Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with all the spiritual blessings of heaven in Christ. Before the world was made, he chose us, chose us in Christ, to be holy and spotless, and to live through love in his presence (Eph. 1:3-4).

CALL TO RELIGIOUS LIFE

It is encouraging to know that the goal of religious life as lived by the nuns of the Order of Preachers is basically the same as that of every other Christian, every other Catholic. All members of the Church are called in baptism to a life of holiness, a life of union with God. A Dominican nun's vocation to religious life has its source in this consecration to Christ.

The nun's initial formation as well as her ongoing development takes its form from the final end or goal of her religious profession: total dedication to God in the Order of Preachers until death.¹ So it is clear that the spiritual journey she embarks on in religious life is in truth a continuation of a relationship with God in Christ that had its beginning in the sacrament of baptism.

INITIAL FORMATION

Initial formation is especially an effort to assist the postulant or novice to arrive at a deeper awareness of her giftedness, both spiritual and human. The whole person is dedicated to God and through the sacrament of baptism the novice is now empowered to surrender herself to God beyond all that she is as yet able to realize. Instruction, prayer, study and living the monastic life are formative and are meant to develop and deepen day by day the sister's awareness of God's indwelling presence and the empowering that the Holy Spirit's gifts give to her spirit.²

Now instead of the spirit of the world, we have received the Spirit that comes from God, to teach us to understand the gifts that he has given us. (1 Cor. 2:12)

Our baptismal commitment to Christ and, therefore, our commitment through religious profession, places Jesus Christ at the very center of our lives: Jesus Christ true God become true Man. The incarnate Son of God holds a place of centrality in all

Christian thought and endeavor. All our ascetical efforts and our thinking should be modeled after Christ and, in fact, are shaped by him from within.

Our following of Christ is a following of Christ in Christ where the very power to follow is given by the one in whose mystical body we have our life. We are "inserted" into Him, the whole Christ, by the grace of baptism. In him₃ we quite literally live and move and have our being.

CENTRALITY OF CHRIST AND OUR HUMANNESS

Thus a call to religious life can clearly be seen as a call to a deep personal relationship with the Lord Jesus. This is the ultimate source and meaning of religious profession. For the religious Jesus Christ is her all. In him and through him by the power of the Holy Spirit she is ever turned to the Father. She sees in Christ and in her relationship with him the fulfillment of all her heart's deepest desires, and the ever present yearnings of her heart.

Because God has taken upon himself a human nature and entered this world of time and space, all that constitutes our human life in this world is sacramental. It has become a sign or symbol of God's presence and activity among us. God's design in all that he has created is to sanctify all things and, because of our original disobedience, to restore all things to himself in Christ. God wills to bring every human being to holiness of life; this call to holiness is a universal call. In Christ this wonder is already accomplished. The contemplative's task is to enter ever more deeply into this great mystery of salvation and holiness by her ever more intense union with Christ. In her commitment to contemplative life the Dominican nun enters into this oneness with Christ by making use of the means provided by St. Dominic himself when he established his Order. He destined his Order precisely for the glory of God through contemplation overflowing to the salvation of souls by means of "holy preaching".

It is by pondering the Word of God in silence and solitude and by giving herself totally to God in the fullness of contemplative life that the Dominican nun fulfills her vocation of preaching. The nun's life and prayer are constantly directed to assisting the priests, brothers and sisters of the Order that the Word might bear fruit in the salvation of souls.

VOCATION EVALUATION

Before a candidate's entrance into the monastery, there is a somewhat lengthy period of evaluation of her call to contemplative religious life. During this time the novice directress and the candidate spend time together becoming acquainted and sharing information: the candidate, about herself and her attraction to

cloistered contemplative life; the directress, about the realities of this contemplative life.

This process should initiate growth in self-knowledge for the candidate. She should gain some insights into her mixed motives (which are normal) for wanting to enter religious life. These beginnings will be very small but are precious. Hopefully, they will become the foundation of a healthy, life-long development of her relationship with herself, with God and with others.

Personality development should have reached a certain level of maturity in the candidate before entrance into the monastery. This would give her sufficient autonomy to sustain the difficulties inherent in the process of religious formation. It may become evident at this point that the candidate requires professional counseling prior to entrance.

POSTULANCY AND NOVITIATE

The periods of postulancy and novitiate are a time of testing on the part of the postulant or novice and also on the part of the community. The sister, eager to respond to God's call to serve him in a special way, tests herself and her capabilities for living this life. She gradually becomes more aware of her real values, strengths and weaknesses. She gains these insights as she grows in her understanding of contemplative life and the charism (spirit, ideals, goals) of the Dominican Order and of the community she has joined. She examines the sincerity of her calling and her convictions about its truly coming to her from God. In the light of all this she must be honest about her determination to surrender to God's invitation and to⁴ walk this particular way with Christ for the whole of her life.

LIFE-LONG COMMITMENT

To be a true response to God's call the novice's "yes", of necessity, becomes a life-long commitment through pronouncing the vows of religion. The Church is greatly enriched by this total self-giving of the religious and her apostolate will bear abundant fruit.⁵ For the contemplative who does not have an active apostolate, this assurance of the value and fruitfulness of her life is very encouraging and is an incentive to make the gift of herself to God more complete day by day. At every moment she can increase the riches of the Church. As her faith and trust in the meaning of her vocation grow, she will experience a deep, and at times an overwhelming, joy and gratitude that her simple, hidden life of prayer and penance is so valuable to God and to the Church. It is necessary constantly to nurture this faith in the worth of monastic life.

MONASTIC OBSERVANCES

Gradually the postulant or novice⁶ is introduced into the practice of the monastic observances. The observances chosen

by St. Dominic were those that he had experienced as most conducive to the goal he had in mind: the glory of God through contemplation (union with God). The fruit of this contemplation brings about the salvation of souls. This is accomplished by means of apostolic preaching on the part of the friars and by "pondering" the Word on the part of the nuns.

The major observances of Dominican monastic life include common life, the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience, liturgical and private prayer, study and work. There are also very important observances which create an atmosphere and safeguard fidelity to this monastic way of life. These are enclosure, silence, the cell, common table, habit, works of penance and regular chapter. These observances are the way that the novice must journey in order to arrive gradually at an awareness of her identity as a Dominican. This self-identity is very important. It is an ongoing development on the natural level and the supernatural level. All the observances are meant to be means of this growth during the whole course of her life.

Instruction in and study of the principal elements of the spiritual life are among the most important observances for the postulant or novice. Aspects of this instruction include the indwelling of the Holy Trinity in the soul, prayer, fostering love of God and neighbor,⁷ humility, penance and faithfulness in keeping the observances.

During the whole period of novitiate formation the novice experiences her frailty and is in need of encouragement in order to persevere in the effort to know herself and develop her potentialities as a person. This is precisely what constitutes the ever-present element of asceticism in monastic life. The novice learns to accept her human situation and to sustain a determined effort day by day, and even moment by moment, to yield to God's transforming power which is at work in her in very undramatic ways. This call to constant conversion is an enduring challenge and also a sign of hope since it is God's grace that continually urges her on to holiness of life. The novice need not look for extra penances. Her daily life of fidelity to grace provides ample opportunities for the practice of self-denial.

Here I am choosing to develop briefly some of the observances.

COMMUNITY LIFE

Community life is essential to growth in love of God and love of one another. It is here that Christ in our midst teaches us how to become more united in love and to bear witness to that universal reconciliation with God to which all are called. The very human, natural flow of every day life, working with other sisters, exchanges at recreation, duties and work in the

community, are formative and are encouraged so that the young nun may grow.

THE VOWS

It is by means of the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience that the religious freely dedicates herself totally to Christ. The whole period of the novitiate is devoted to preparing her for this offering of herself in worship to God. It is important that she have a clear understanding of the meaning and obligations of this enduring commitment.

In the Dominican Order only the vow of obedience is specifically mentioned in the profession formula. By pronouncing this one vow the nun intends to assume the obligations of the other two vows as well. The vows, which are rooted in baptism are something positive, a dynamic force in the life of the religious. They are instruments for activating the powers implanted in baptism.

By chastity the nun transcends earthly love and companionship and is united in heart to God so she can devote herself more fruitfully to God in love and in sharing the work of human salvation.

By poverty her heart is set on the pursuit of heavenly goods. Earthly goods are consecrated to God by giving them up altogether or using them only as they are necessary or useful for God's honor and glory.

By the vow of obedience the nun enters into the obedience of Christ who gave himself up for us upon the cross out of obedience to his Father's will. She becomes a part of the perfect, eternal, world-redeeming oblation of Christ to His Father.

PRAYER

Everything in the contemplative life is planned and arranged to create an atmosphere in which the nun can maintain peace of mind and heart and foster continual remembrance of God.

The call to liturgical prayer throughout the day constitutes the basic structure of monastic life. The celebration of the Eucharist is the very heart of the life of the nun.⁸ Here the nuns gather as church to hear God's Word, enter into it and become with Jesus Christ a pure and perfect oblation to the Father for the salvation of the whole world.

Time is provided each day for private prayer, lectio divina, and study. To these the nun devotes herself in the spirit of St. Dominic who faithfully devoted himself to liturgical prayer and private prayer.⁹

Devotion to Mary and to St. Dominic have always been fostered in the Order from its foundation. ¹⁰

ENCLOSURE

Enclosure, or cloister, is a very important observance for the Dominican contemplative nun. By it she withdraws from the world and its concerns so that she can more freely devote herself to the kingdom of God in a hidden life of prayer, solitude and silence. The nun strives to cultivate a deep desire for silence and inner solitude so as to hear the Word of God in her heart where silence and solitude give way to communion with the Triune God.

ONGOING DEVELOPMENT

Study of the spiritual life, growth and development of the human person, intellectually, physically, emotionally, are priorities in monastic life. Whenever possible the artistic and creative gifts of the individual are encouraged, and opportunity for instruction is made available. This giftedness is God-given and is precious. Its development is an expression of gratitude to God and should be helpful to the community.

Of utmost importance is the internalizing of all these values and observances of monastic contemplative life. The whole span of life is spent in this effort to give inner meaning to these outward practices. The whole purpose of this self offering to God is to surrender to the Gospel values revealed by Jesus. The call is to enter ever more deeply into the "Yes" of Christ to his Father and to become one with Jesus who is the glory of the Father. In and through Jesus the Dominican Nun is meant to attain the goal of her contemplative life: the glory of God through contemplation that overflows to the salvation of souls.

¹ Book of the Constitutions of the Nuns of the Order of Preachers, No. 174, SI.

² ibid., No. 125, SI.

³ R.W. Gleason, S.J., To Live is Christ, New York, 1961, p. IX.

⁴ Decree on the Adaptation of the Religious Life, No.1, par.3.

⁵ ibid., No.1, par. 3.

⁶ op.cit., Constitutions, No. 119, S2.

⁷ ibid., No. 125, SII.

⁸ ibid., No. 81.

⁹ ibid., No. 93.

¹⁰ ibid., Nos. 95,96.

REFLECTIONS ON
THE SPIRIT AND STRUCTURE OF DOMINICAN GOVERNMENT

Sister Mary Thomas, O.P.
Buffalo

"Open my eyes, O Lord, that I may see the wonders of your law."

Psalm 118

Our law is a facet of our life. As a facet of the diamond it reflects with sparkling brilliance the spirit of St. Dominic, the Gospel man. And so we find it is more person than structure, more life than code. It is a way -- God's way for us -- and it leads to the fulness of life, joy in his presence forever. "Law finds its fulfillment in love." (1)

In view of this it would be inadequate to describe Dominican government merely in terms of obligations, rights, privileges, structures and procedures. It is not a marriage of convenience linking unlikely partners for better or for worse. It is a free offer from the Cross.

Dominican government is sometimes compared to a democracy as contrasted with a benevolent monarchy. It presents a fine balance between several forms of rule. We are told that St. Dominic deliberately chose the Rule of St. Augustine for his Order because that Rule admitted of a free and healthy adaptation to his unique apostolate. Significantly he chose it in consultation with his brethren. The earliest drafts of the Constitutions of his Order were evolved by St. Dominic within the framework of General Chapters so that here again the brethren had a distinct share in the work, helped to shape the Order.

It has been said that the Dominican Constitutions lay on the table when the Founding Fathers of our country were assembled to draw up the American Constitutions. Although this thesis may not be defended literally there is a ring of truth about it, for the Dominican Constitutions have a striking element of balance of power which was in St. Dominic's day unprecedented. St. Dominic was a thoroughly original legislator.

A brief look at the history of Dominican law will help to enrich

our understanding of it. In founding his Order St. Dominic was en-fleshing an ideal which was innovative, indeed daring in the eyes of his contemporaries. His personal life explains this to a degree. He was first of all a canon regular, following a monastic way of life in the Cathedral Chapter at Osma in Spain. The pattern of days and nights included liturgical prayer -- the daily celebration of the conventual Mass and choral office -- intensive study and long hours of contemplation. Next, at the mandate of his bishop he entered upon a highly active apostolate. In the course of his travels on a political embassy for the king of Spain he and Bishop Diego encountered the Albigensian heresy in southern France. Aware of the urgent need for qualified preachers to counter this rapidly spreading disease of the spirit, St. Dominic responded to the appeal of Pope Innocent III and devoted the best years of his life to preaching. The need to insure the continuance of this work led directly to the foundation of his Order.

Throughout the years of his preaching apostolate in southern France and Italy St. Dominic never ceased to be the man of prayer, the Gospel man "fast-knit to Christ." (2) Prayer was the source of his power and success. The Spirit spoke through him because he was totally given up to the drive of the divine Wind. In working out the Constitutions of his Order therefore, St. Dominic sought to combine the life of a canon with the mobile way of the preacher. Daily he himself sang Mass whenever humanly possible; daily he and his brethren recited the divine office together. Yet other monastic customs of the then existing monastic Orders had to be pruned to a minimum lest study, that indispensable tool for competent preaching, be jeopardized. Two whole ways of life which had been until then entirely distinct and separate from one another were now welded by St. Dominic into a rich new entity, taut with healthy tension. This reflects his personality, his extraordinary combination of balance and intensity, and throws light on the quality of his Order.

Not only the Friars but the Nuns as well live out this breadth of vision. In St. Dominic's view the role of the latter was unique, distinct and essential to his Order. Historically they came first. The Monastery at Prouille was established in 1206, the first house of Friars at Toulouse around 1215. (3) His care to provide legislation for the monasteries of Prouille, St. Sixtus and Madrid testifies to his keen interest in assuring their development according to the pattern shown him "on the mount" of contemplation. His successors followed the same line, refining and tempering the governmental shape of the life of the Nuns to fit changing times. Major revisions of the Nuns' Constitutions were effected by Humbert of Romans in 1259, by Hyacinth Cormier in 1930 and by Anicetus Fernandez in 1971. The two revisions made in our century were occasioned by the promulgation of the 1917 Code of Canon Law and the Second Vatican Council. At the present writing another revision is in process, designed to implement the canons dealing with religious life in

the 1983 Code of Canon Law.

The hand of the Friars Preachers in the governmental structures of the Nuns is clear and indisputable. It is a part of St. Dominic's legacy and guarantees our authenticity as Dominicans, as well as our firmly rooted place within the Order. It is important to realize at the same time that the principle of complementarity is basic and essential to the healthy functioning of the whole Dominican family. There is a mutual interdependence between all the members. This underlying principle reflects the particular kind of government chosen by the early Dominicans and valued to this day, that balance of power mentioned earlier, the distinctive mark of Dominican government.

In considering the government proper to Dominican Nuns three aspects commend themselves for particular mention. It is monastic. It is broad and joyous. Its meaning is love.

When St. Dominic gathered the first Nuns at Prouille he was concerned to provide them from the start with a viable law and legal procedure. To this end he drew up a rule for them based on the customs of Citeaux. (4) The orientation of the community was clearly Cistercian. (5) Both Bishop Diego and Brother Dominic were in close touch with the Abbey of Citeaux and there is good reason to think that they planned to incorporate the foundation in the Order of St. Bernard as an abbey of women. (6) Actually the Cistercians were opposed to incorporating feminine abbeys at that juncture in their history. Yet it is important to remember that "Prouille was born and had grown up among the Cistercians." (7)

The Cistercian Nuns had no distinct rule of their own but followed the rule and customs of the monks. So it was that the first Dominican Nuns began their religious life in a purely monastic framework. This was the seed of the complementary role they were destined to play within the Order, a role clearly recognizable today. In 1216 we find St. Dominic drawing up from a corrected version of an earlier text a set of observances for the Nuns based on the observances of the Friars Preachers. (8)

This theme re-sounds in the text of the present Constitutions of the Nuns. "It is for the brethren to spread throughout the world the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (9), and for the Nuns to seek him in secret, to ponder and pray, so that the word which has come forth from the mouth of God may not return to him void, but may prosper in those things for which he sent it." (10)

What emphasizes the Nuns' distinctive role in the Order is precisely the monastic structure of their life, clearly delineated in the Rule drawn up for the Nuns at Prouille, for the later foundation at St. Sixtus in Rome, and again for the Monastery at Madrid. While for the Nuns the

emphasis is on a contemplative way of life, the fulfillment of a preaching vocation is guaranteed them by their relationship to the Friars. In St. Dominic's plan Friars and Nuns formed an indissoluble whole, the one Order of Preachers. If the Friars held the world as their cloister and were to engage in the literal preaching of the Word without pause, the Nuns held the same world in their hearts, preaching by a way of life symbolized and effected by their cloister. If the Friars' preaching could bear fruit only in the measure in which it was rooted in study and contemplation, the Nuns' witness could only resound out of the hidden depths of their silence.

The monastic framework of legislation for the Nuns perdures to this day and in our times takes its reference from Church documents outlining its practise. (11) Incorporated in our Constitutions are regulations for common life, the following of the counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience, provisions for monastic enclosure and silence, a central and unifying focus on the daily celebration of the Conventual Mass and its overflow in the Liturgy of the Hours, private prayer, lectio divina, study, work and above all the mutual esteem and love among the members of each community which binds the whole together. The spirit of this legislation, abundantly clear from even an initial perusal of the text, is basically oriented to love: love for God and for one another within the context of the Church.

The section of the Constitutions devoted to the government of the monastery is enlightening for our purpose. Here we encounter the Chapter of the monastery, a body comprising all the solemnly professed members of the community. It is the Chapter which elects the Prioress and at least three members of her Council, normally totalling seven Nuns. In electing the Prioress the Chapter bears in mind her threefold duty: to "foster the unity of charity, constantly maintain the contemplative life of the Nuns, and diligently care for regular discipline." (12) This ordering of duties is significant: contemplation and discipline are for the sake of charity.

The Prioress is elected for a three-year term and may be re-elected. A third term is only allowed by way of exception, in case of manifest need. This legislation ensures a consistent balance of power within the community. Official status is seen as a means of service for the good of all.

In addition to the election of the Prioress the monastery Chapter is responsible for compiling the Directory or body of local customs and submitting it to a regular review. At six-year intervals the Chapter may petition the Master of the Order for any changes in it judged opportune. (13) The Chapter casts a deliberative vote for the admission of new members to the community. (14) Its consultative vote is required for all

matters of major importance. Thus each member has a realistic share in the decision-making, shaping and government of the community.

Lest our view of government threaten to become legalistic we hasten to recall the second characteristic note mentioned above. Dominican government is broad and joyous.

St. Dominic was at his innovative best in the matter of dispensation. For him and for his Order dispensation was never meant to be a condescension to human weakness. It was designed as a positive strength and was incorporated as a built-in element revealing once again the unique character of the Dominican way. It was a practical enunciation of the right ordering of the preacher's activities. Virile in its cutting away of excrescences on the growth of the religious body, it was destined for mature religious, strong enough to cleave to their ultimate goal with clear minds and selfless wills. It left no room for comparisons between individuals. It had a keen eye for the infinitely varying situations and needs cropping up from country to country, age to age. Dominicans were for the Church. Their law must be finely tempered so as to bend and adapt to the Church's needs, retaining all its force while transcending regulations which could, here or there, obscure the higher goal. The freedom of the Spirit was to be allowed full scope and adherence to that freedom was to liberate the individual Dominican into the fulness of freedom in his or her own life.

Dispensation has high value in the lives of the Nuns, functioning, as for the Friars, in an orchestrated overall movement towards the goal of the community and the Order. The Constitutions of the Nuns spell out its balanced application to regular observance in the monasteries and assign the competency to dispense not only to the Master of the Order but also to each Prioress and her substitute. (15) Ordinarily dispensations are given to individuals rather than to entire communities. Wherever there is an obvious need, freedom of dispensation is provided within the law itself.

From this fact proceeds the broad and joyous spirit so characteristic of Dominican government. Space is provided within our law for a free and full unfolding of each person's potential, while the fact that dispensation is a basic part of the law makes individual freedom the fruit of obedience. Dispensation enhances the healthy development of the vowed life in the context of the Christian life, and lifts the following of the counsels to the plane of faith which believes that "all things are possible with God." (16) There is no need to stress the joyous quality of Dominican life for it stands out in the most casual of encounters with Dominicans. The joy is contagious and it is deep, welling up from the basic truth of our life which is that it is a life given by God and leading back to him. The route may differ for each one but the goal is the same.

We can therefore in all honesty say of our Dominican government that its meaning is love. At the head of the Constitutions it is written: "The nuns as well as the brethren should direct their whole life to perfect charity towards God and neighbor, caring for and procuring the effective salvation of men, regarding themselves first and foremost as true members of Christ, giving themselves totally for the gaining of souls, as the Lord Jesus the Savior of all offered himself totally for our salvation." (17) And again, commenting on the Rule of St. Augustine, "the first reason for which we are gathered together is that we may dwell together in unity and have one mind and one heart in God. Reaching beyond the limits of the monastery, this unity achieves its fulness in communion with the Order and the whole Church of Christ." (19)

Without this orientation to the fulness of life a body of laws would be sterile indeed. Norms and detailed legislation might effect uniformity and smooth functioning within the group for a time but ultimately it would end in breakdown for lack of vision. The body of law must pulse with the breath of life, must lead to something beyond itself. Dominican law, reflecting the soul of its founder St. Dominic, is infused with the breath of the Spirit of Love. Hence its joyousness, its freedom.

Free and austere: the two go together. Freedom is at the opposite pole from laxity. We can afford to be vigilant for we are rooted in a confident joy. Austerity is the pruning that fosters new growth, more abundant fruit. We can afford to embrace it for the sake of the end. And louder than the rigor of this logic is the irresistible call to the heroic. It is a case of leaping forward to meet God's will with strong desire, the full welcome of the heart, simply because it is his will. Love needs no further reasons.

So we find ourselves full circle, returning to our initial scriptural concept of Dominican government. "Open my eyes, O Lord, that I may see the wonders of your law." Trying to penetrate the formularies which we have traced from the beginnings of the Order, endeavoring to situate them in the context of Christian and religious life in the evolving Church, discovering in them clear and unmistakable echoes of the new law and the new commandment given us by the Word Incarnate, we can repeat with a spontaneous burst of joyous recognition, "Law finds its fulfillment in love."

FOOTNOTES

- (1) Liturgy, Antiphon at Sext, Tuesday of Week III.
- (2) Dante, Divine Comedy, Paradise.
- (3) Vicair, M.-H., O.P., St. Dominic and His Times, p. 169.
- (4) Ibid., p. 128.
- (5) Ibid., p. 128.
- (6) Ibid., p. 128.
- (7) Ibid., p. 128.
- (8) Ibid., p. 432-435.
- (9) Honorius III, January, 1221.
- (10) Isaias, 55:10; Basic Constitution of the Nuns, I, S. II
- (11) Lumen Gentium, Ch. VI, nn. 43-47; Perfectae Caritatis; see also Bibliography below.
- (12) Constitutions of the Nuns, N. 214.
- (13) Ibid., N. 228.
- (14) Ibid., N. 222, S. II.
- (15) Ibid., N. 208, S. II.
- (16) Mark 10: 27 (R.S.V.)
- (17) Basic Constitution of the Nuns, N. 1, S. II.
- (18) Constitutions of the Nuns, N. 2, S. I.

My Damsel Dances

On a day wild with January,
In a winter place
Whose floor is laid with diamond-crusted lion-cub fur,
A plum tree dances in a circle of earth.

She has three trunks like trinity,
Three twining columns feigning ebony
And six or seven arms;
A dusky courtly damsel, she,
And now's the season of her best performance:

Now, before her green hair
Hides her like humility,
And all the gold-green plumlets
Hang their bronze bells in her locks;
Now, while her form is free and clean as poverty.

The ground breathes antiphons into her buried feet
And little birds go soaring up
Among the woven pillars,
Along the rainbow-arcs ---
And yet, how dark and plain her vestments are!
Her mime is clear as innocence
And solemn as the olive-featured boys
In the cathedral of Seville.

The maidens consider her measures,
Or wave the cadences, or sing;
But she my damsel dances,
Stilly gesturing,
Bowing, turning moveless
In the earthen ring.

Sister Maria of the Cross, O.P.
Summit

PREAMBLES TO GOVERNMENT

Sr. Mary Francis, O.P.
Farmington Hills, Michigan

I. THE GOAL IS A GIFT!

"And so I prayed, and understanding was given to me;
I entreated, and the spirit of Wisdom came to me...
She it was I loved and searched for from my youth;
I resolved to have her as my bride,
I fell in love with her beauty." Wisdom, 7:5; 8:2.

"To him who has more shall be given. To him who has not, even the little that he has shall be taken from him." Mark 4.

Christianity is a Wisdom. A Wisdom in the ancient Semitic sense is a Way of Life spelling out the ultimate goal and the means of getting there. What makes our Wisdom different from others is the fact that Christ Himself is that Wisdom. And he taught openly and frankly that the happiness we all desire is reached only by a gift which integrates a new goal and new means. The person who has accepted the gift - the vision and reality of Transcendent Love - receives the means. The one who refuses (for God does not force his gifts) does not remain even fully human. For people do not remain on plateaux. If we are not reaching out for higher goals, soon we shall be falling back to lower levels of being and acting. And the falls can take us right back to the most primitive behavior, as this twentieth century has sadly witnessed over and over again.

"To anyone who has, more will be given" is surely no social ethic. Rather, it speaks of the attitude of openness to God and his Word. The gift is the goal. Openness to the transcendent goals of human life (an "ear for truth, beauty, goodness", etc.) is a gift calling for appropriate means. So both the goal and the means are "grace" streaming from the goodness of God.

We humans are put together in such a way that we constantly structure our own goals, and then galvanize our energies to reach those ends through selected means. Isn't this an experience of being created in God's own image and likeness? But when it is a question of ultimate goals, we call the process WISDOM. When, in addition, we recognize that the goals go beyond our capacities, then we accept religious faith as our Wisdom. Yet it would be a mistake to think that religion has a monopoly on faith. We act on faith all day, every day! (Do we have "evidence" for what the media tell us? for the basic honesty of the people we deal with? for the love others tell us they have for us? or even of ours for them?) What religion provides is a faith that proposes both goal and means on the basis of a divine authority. We believe because of the One Who Speaks - not just in the void, but in a way that has become an "experience" for us. And so, it becomes extremely important to know whether, in fact, the Creator of the Universe has indeed spoken. And if so, what he has said. Our ultimate happiness hinges on the answers to such queries. This is the reason, perhaps, behind the insistence of the Lord, "Let him who has ears to hear, listen!"

The goal proposed by the Lord was unheard of before he came on the human scene. We call it "agape" or Christian Love. True enough, the Old Testament had an experience of God's Love and had worked out a certain theology of that experience. But never had it reached the truth Christ came to reveal: that the Father desired us to be his adopted children,

and enjoy a life of unending happiness with him, in his home. Agape means that kind of intimate participation in the divine nature itself. What is also unique about the Lord's teaching is his claim that God himself has initiated this friendship - not waiting for us to reach out to him, but bending down to raise us up; giving us the means to know and love in a divine manner. The Christian Faith is just as preposterous and just as decidedly practical as that. If it is true, we had better climb on board! If it is false, what is the meaning and purpose of life? What other goal has ever quenched the hungers of the spirit? Are we just the "sport of God"? mockeries of a Creator who has built into us a yearning for a goal that he never intends to fulfill? Or are we rather "emergent possibilities", capable, through the gifts of grace, of being integrated within the parameters of divine friendship? If the latter is true, what fools we would be to miss the possibility! - These are the questionings that go on in the often unspoken depths of the heart today, just as truly as in by-gone ages. And the answers we accept are constitutive of the lives we lead.

"Thus have the paths of those on earth been straightened,
and men have been taught what pleases you,
and saved, by Wisdom." Wisdom 9: 13.

I would like to suggest that it is only within the broadest context of Wisdom that we humans can fully approach the questions of Government, and all the intricacies of human behavior such an issue involves.

II. THE GIFT IS THE GOAL.

At the risk of being utterly too sweeping, perhaps we could say that there are three major world-views appearing on the scene of human history before our own emerged. Each, in its own way, has affected us as persons and as members of any sort of society, including church and religious life.

1. Ancient worldview: organic and static; cyclic but rigidly hierarchical.

These are the characteristics of people who are still caught up in primitive habits and consciousness. For it's a truism that the more primitive a people is, the more it tends to fixed conservatism in attitudes, and especially in cult. Early men and women lived by tribal taboos and strict class distinctions both as a means of insuring the continuance of the groups as such, and as a way of protecting it from baneful influences - natural or praeternatural. The cyclic patterns (change of the seasons, tides, etc.) provided a framework which allowed for little deviation from the "laws of being and surviving". And so the laws themselves were often divinized. These are the attitudes in which myth and literal interpretation dominate, and we see the same lines of development repeated in children, usually between ages 3 to 10. Consciousness is full of "immediacy" but there is - so far - little reflective or analytic thinking going on.

2. Medieval worldview: still organic and hierarchical, but no longer exclusively cyclic. Christ had changed the courses of history! And medieval Christians thought in terms of end-time. The ancient Roman legal model of the Paterfamilias was transferred to the church and to its structures. But the new wine did not really fit the old skins, and there were many spills! The synthesis between Greek speculation and Christian revelation was an immense achievement grounded in faith, but the new wine was destined, even here, to burst the old skins of rationalism.

The integration of values went far beyond anything Greece or Rome had ever known. The new values, as far as law is concerned, were primarily two: the concept of Christian Love and the status of Woman as equal to Man. It might surprise many to realize that women in the Middle Ages were often teachers - and at times, even at the university levels. (Cf. CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA, "Woman".) But it is the leaven of agape which accounts for all that is truest and best in the medieval synthesis. Life could now be viewed in terms of an ultimate personal goal, and one which lifted the human person to a level of deep and intimate friendship with God. Everything else was measured in terms of that goal - itself a sheer gift. And so, for the first time in human history, we see an entire civilization built upon the desire to attain a goal utterly transcending the powers of nature alone.

3. Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries. The seeds sown in the 16th C. revolt matured during these two hundred years. Not only that, but they spent themselves and were rejected in large part by the intellectual world of the time. These are the years when we see a mechanistic, non-organic worldview taking shape. It was not cyclic but evolutionary. It was not centered upon goals beyond purely human powers, but centered on man himself, and what was within his grasp. "Man the pioneer of his own destiny" arrived on the scene. Within this orbit, the claims of the established churches could only be questioned or rejected as lacking in rational evidence. Again we see that a similar stage characterizes the patterns of individual growth. Teenage rebellion is also an attempt to find one's identity over against recognized authority. But children and teenagers are not yet adults. Perhaps the greatest error made by the church in these difficult centuries was the attempt to keep the lid on, so to speak, by appealing strongly to "authority without any questions asked". Maturity which seemed to threaten authority was not encouraged. And so, the inevitable result was rebellion or childish and fearful submission. Certainly these trends were not characteristic of all, but they do occur in significant enough proportions to draw, I believe, the parallels with the individual lines of development.
4. Late Twentieth century. "Holistic", organic, cyclic and developmental in its best expressions, but riddled with nihilism and despair born of divorce from God and from the deeper self. There is, slowly, painfully, a new level of consciousness emerging. Fr. Bernard Lonergan, S.J. aptly termed it the "switch to interiority". The challenge we face today touches life as a whole, for it involves the reintegration of human personality and human society. Whether we call it "yang and yin" or "animus and anima" or "rational and intuitive /instinctual life, or any other set of terms (right and left brain included), we are facing the basic duality within human nature. Ultimately we are concerned with man's openness and call to both immanency and transcendence. A "whole" human person is in touch with the reality of the here and now in all of its aspects. And that kind of "being in touch" includes reaching out to God as the only One who can, in the last analysis, ground personal self-worth. As persons, we are "worth the risk" because we are being loved into being every moment of our existence. Whether or not we know that and accept it colors every facet of social relations, from government to leisure activities. (cf. the issues of abortion or pornography.)

This is where the contemplative witness rises with tremendous force and vitality in our day. For in contemplation we learn our own worth as it is given by the One who loves us, and we learn the sacred worth of everything else in creation. On that basis we can structure society, we can use the forms of law and government with charity and discretion. Contemplatives have a great deal to say to the men and women of our times!

Thomas Merton - very much in touch - once summed up his understanding of a contemplative in these words:

"The contemplative is... he who risked his mind in the desert beyond language and beyond ideas where God is encountered in the nakedness of pure trust, that is to say in the surrender of our poverty and incompleteness in order no longer to clench our minds in a cramp upon themselves, as if thinking made us exist... The contemplative has nothing to tell you except to reassure you and say that if you dare to penetrate your own silence and risk the sharing of the solitude with the lonely other who seeks God through you, then you will truly recover the light and capacity to understand what is beyond words and beyond explanations because it is too close to be explained: it is the intimate union in the depths of your own heart, of God's spirit and your own secret inmost self, so that you and He are in all truth One Spirit." Letter to Dom Francis Decroix.

Was it not St. Thomas who told us that the Holy Spirit IS the New Law of charity? In this light prayer does indeed become "the truest guarantee of personal freedom". And we need this kind of freedom in our monasteries, if contemplation is to flourish. Within the overall structures of our regular life, we need time and opportunity for the strictly spontaneous, the fully natural, the "heartily unplanned" in each day. How else can we be open to the sudden invasions of the Spirit? Today we even have a word for this kind of openness - serendipity! Good government in the Christian sense includes these surprises of the Spirit, and is not shattered or threatened by them.

Why be open to our own irrationality? The answer is simple: in order to be able to believe. Belief is by definition "evidence of things unseen", touching reality beyond the grasp of reason, although it may not be unreasonable to believe. We need our beliefs for they carry the rationalizations necessary to live irrationally! (to paraphrase Otto Rank). In other words, there is no purity of heart via repression, for that only leads to murky waters. We may choose to suppress some instinctive urge, and that is a conscious act, perhaps causing pain. But repression is an unwillingness to face the issue squarely and make the choice, one way or the other. That is why it can be so dangerous for a contemplative to deny the full spectrum of drives, from the lowest to the highest. They won't go away, but they may well fester. We have to integrate all of our irrational impulses within the total values of each day, and then live them authentically and, yes, reasonably.

As for the playfulness of inspired irrationality, the liturgy is an unsurpassed mistress! Take, for example, this text from St. Luke:

"As was prescribed by the Law, they offered to the Lord two turtle doves or a pair of young pigeons."

Who, in his or her right mind (read "rationality") would consider those words singable! Yet sing them we do, and with gusto, every Feb. 2nd. Why? Is it not because our response does not come from or address "right minds" but those unconscious depths in which fertile associations abound. Turtle doves, pigeons and the eventual sacrifice of this Child are what we sing about, and deeper than that, there is the obscure awareness or fear that peace is only found through some form of sacrifice. Is this sadistic? Is it masochistic? a remnant of an avenging-God theology? It could be all three. But just as truly, it can be the song of a spirit free in the gift of grace, a grace won at an inestimable price. How do we know why we sing the song? That is what purity of heart teaches, and it is discovered by humble openness to our irrationality, in toto.

For the "irrational" is not simply the "non-rational", as if to suggest that one can exist without the other. "Irrationality" implies a force which goes against the rigid controls of reason. It includes the spontaneous and the playful, the inspired as well as the blind urges of life. The relationship should be complementary; a vital kind of equilibrium requiring fine tuning and continual adjustments. That is what it means to say that our "beliefs carry the rationalizations we need in order to live irrationally". "Beliefs" try to conceptualize and enunciate these basically non-conceptual realities. Beliefs bring them to the forum of consciousness, but never fully. And when it comes to belief in God, our dogmas mediate the awesome distance between God and the spirit. As T.S. Eliot so wisely puts it, "Human kind cannot bear much reality." They do "protect us" against too immediate, too direct an encounter with God. That is their function and also their liability. Beliefs are themselves "symbols", partly revealing, partly concealing the Reality professed.

III. SEEING THE GOAL, UTILIZING THE GIFT.

The masters of the spiritual life teach the need for an ongoing process of growth in the knowledge of God and the knowledge of self. And we know that knowledge here is not merely in the head. It is laden with affectivity. Not that we fail to see others, but that we only see them through the tints of our particular glasses! And herein lies the rose or the thorn in most human relationships, including good government.

Some of the disciples of C.G. Jung have worked out a comprehensive but simple test known as the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory. Out of sixteen basic Personality Types, you discover your own, with its special gifts and its weaknesses. But the Inventory also gives you deep insight into how others, differing from you, also function. There is a wide range here, not only in the ways in which we take in information, but also in how we process and use what we assimilate. Are you a Thinker? a Feeler? a Judger? an Intuitive? Are you extrovert or introvert? The particular mix which makes up "you" has strong repercussions on the ways in which you relate to others in community. And of course, this means government. Some people tend naturally to be conservative, to resist change, to want details spelled out in legal formulae, to judge life in terms of its stability. Others are more spontaneous, creative, cannot be pinned down for long or put to meaningless tasks, etc. These are not areas of moral right and wrong. But they can become such if inordinate demands are made upon persons of differing types to conform to the standards of others. Here, perhaps, is an insight into what our Constitutions mean when they speak of "excessive tension" in work. What is excessive for

one may be sheer joy for another.

As Jung sees it, we humans are meant to develop in such a way that all four of our functions eventually come into play: Intuitive, Sensing, Perceiving and Judging. But that takes time and effort and encouragement. That takes "community". But the flowering of these four marks a person with a beauty and a balance too impressive to be missed! If anyone wishes to test the practical value of Jung's work, I can only recommend PLEASE UNDERSTAND ME by Kiersey and Bates. It could help individuals to recognize their gifts and weaknesses, and to honor the same in others. But no psychological aids will ever replace the Spirit and the Love poured into our hearts. "Seeing the goal and utilizing the gift" means - always - accepting the risks of growth in the Spirit. And as has been well said, "It's lonely out on the growing edge". (Scott Peck, M.D.) How much of that kind of loneliness do we tolerate in ourselves? in our communities? The ways in which we view government can tell us much about the way in which we actually answer these questions.

The Emergent Possibility and the Dissipative System.

Contemporary physics is an extraordinary affair. What breakthroughs since Einstein first enunciated his Laws of relativity, General and Special! But we do not have to be a nuclear or astro physicist to utilize some of the insights coming out of physics.

When Albert Einstein realized what his theory of Relativity involved, he was scandalized. We have his famous exclamation, "But God does not play dice with the universe!" For he had discovered that at the level of micro-physics - the very building blocks of our world - no evidence of cause and effect can be found. The micro particles bounce around and bombard each other in random and spontaneous activity. How could an ordered universe have developed out of such apparent chaos? It is only in recent years that some insight into that enigma has appeared on the scene. Physicists now realize that the random activity of particles at the micro level takes place ONLY within determined parameters. And it is the very interplay of particles within the parameters which determine the "emergent possibilities". The evidence, in other words, points to a Supreme Intelligence "at play" in the world! What a marvelous confirmation of contemplative Wisdom! Does not Wisdom herself tell us that she is "at play in the world, delighting to be with the children of men"? Yet all is not play. And the buildup of our visible universe involves the breakdown and reshaping of older constellations of particles. This is what is called a "dissipative system". In other words, from the lowest spark of inorganic life we find change, but change that is purposeful, even if not consciously so. We find teleology.

Is there not some message here, too, for government at the macro level? We cannot hope to lay down, once and for all, norms that will last forever. Even the best of them have to be continually reinterpreted, yet always within the parameters of the authentic ends of our life. If we view change in this light, government becomes an invitation to respond to grace, even to the "cosmic dance" of being! We can afford to drop our hostile-aggressive systems in exchange for a truly emergent possibility! and that, of course, is sanctity. That is the Love of God driving us up and beyond the merely evolutionary ladder and into the very arms of God.

Dialoguing with the Gift.

In a world that has become one-sided by over-privileging the rational, aggressive, controlling side of human nature, good government (personal or communal) often begins with the humble acceptance of the irrational forces at work in our behavior. "The truth will set you free." "The Spirit blows where he wills." The anguished argument of St. Paul in his "Letter to the Galatians" highlights this duel between rational and irrational (both the biological drives and the higher, spiritual aspirations), and proposes surrender to the Spirit as the only way to fully human living. The dangers of being swamped by the irrational in us are real. But they increase when we refuse to listen to what these inner voices are saying. Our inner government is, at best, a limited monarchy. Surely it has never been a democracy! This is why, for example, a work like Fr. Fabio Giardini's *PRAIERFULNESS* which disusses the difference between conscious rational acts and unconscious irrational attitudes can be of much help not only in the area of prayer as such, but also in questions concerning government and social economy.

If we seek to stifle the inner voices we can count on eventual rebellion. The secret lies in open and honest dialogue. Laws there must be, but their purpose is to serve as guidelines for responding to grace. They are the sealanes down which we steer our ship of state. But how disastrous to confuse the mariner's charts or compass with the sea itself! Government, then, will always be a matter of dynamic equilibrium of forces both rational and irrational, conscious and unconscious, instinctual, intelligent and spiritual. If we learn how to listen, we shall also discover how to plot our course in relative safety, and with the needed courage for taking the needed risks. If not; our ship is likely to go down.

Otto Rank wrote not long before his death,

"Our view of human behavior as extending beyond individual psychology to a broader conception of personality indicates that civilized man does not act only upon the rational guidance of his intellectual ego nor is he driven blindly by the mere elemental forces of his instinctual self. Mankind's civilization, and with it the various types of personality representing and expressing it, has emerged from the perpetual operation of a third principle which combines the rational and irrational elements in a world view based on the conception of the supernatural." *BEYOND PSYCHOLOGY*, p. 62.

For Rank, the most powerful of all human drives is the will to live forever, implanted by a God who intends to help us realize that goal. He comments,

"Man's will to live forever expresses itself and satisfies itself in terms of belief, - manifestly so, since the very nature of immortality prevents man on earth from having definite knowledge in advance and limits him to an act of faith. Immortality inherently belongs to the future, but man works towards it in his present life in terms of various beliefs about it, most of which he draws from the attitudes and habits of thinking, the 'dominant immortality ideology', prevailing in the period of histories in which he lives." Ira Progoff, *DEATH AND REBIRTH OF PSYCHOLOGY*, p. 231. The working out of this primordial will for immortality is the bottomline in the evolution of government. People learned to identify personal experience

and existence with that of a group, a tribe, a nation. And laws were gradually formulated to insure the life and progress of both individual and group. No matter how lucid or explicit or detailed or rational such laws may be, at bottom they are merely tips of the iceberg, or better, "charts" for making one's way over the sea of unconscious life. Rank adds, "It is not sufficient to SEE the irrational element in human life and point it out in RATIONAL terms. On the contrary, it is necessary actually to live it." BEYOND PSYCHOLOGY, p. 14. "Actually living it" involves what we have come to call the ascetical and mystical life.

What of the dialogue between culture and government? This is surely a topic of present concern to all of us. Rank has some illuminating remarks here also:

"Thus we distinguish in the development of culture and the simultaneous creation of the civilized self three layers: the supernatural, the social and the psychological... The earliest magical world-view was for primitive man not a consoling illusion in his difficult struggle for biological survival but an assurance of ETERNAL survival for the self... The most powerful instrument for the creation of his own cultural world was religion as expressed in cult ('culture'), from which spring the fine arts, as well as architecture, drama and literature; in a word, the sum of what survives the short span of one personal life-time...

Man creates culture by changing natural conditions in order to maintain his spiritual self. On the other hand, culture and cultural patterns are instrumental in shaping this self into various personality types. This simultaneous growth and mutual development of personality and culture is not merely valid for the understanding of man's past history, the culture we inherited, but is a living process underlying the creation as well as the maintenance of any given civilization. In this sense, our presentation differs from the approach of the humanistic sciences in that it does not separate the individual from his culture, but conceives of both the personal and cultural development as one inseparable unit... By making memory alive, that is, in being fully ourselves instead of thinking about it, we can acknowledge our spiritual needs without having to condemn them as primitive." BEYOND PSYCHOLOGY, pp. 63-64.

Or, with reference to the integration of the past within the present,

"...Plato's philosophy of the Eros implies three different meanings: the desirous love, which we would call 'libido', the egocentric love, which we designate as narcissistic self-love, and only third and last, the divine sublimated love (e.g. love of wisdom, philosophia), which is commonly considered 'platonic' love proper... Only through Eros, is his message to the decaying Greek civilization, can man rise from the world of the senses into the world of ideas; implying our conception that IDEAS IN THEMSELVES ARE POWERLESS UNLESS THEY ARE CARRIED BY THE LIFE-FORCE of Eros into dynamically powerful ideologies." In other words, ideas carry no real weight unless they are invested with energies coming from our irrational life - instincts, emotions, etc.

"This, however, did not happen with the ideology of love until the Christian era... This new Christian love, AGAPE, was not conceived of as the opposite of Eros but as an altogether different kind - no sublimated Eros or 'platonic love'; but an entirely new attitude towards life which, translated into actual

expression, created a new type of man... The urge for powerful expansion and domination characteristic of the world of Antiquity was replaced and finally complimented by a desire for yielding and surrender manifested in the need to be loved. This yearning for surrender was not a defeatist attitude, a negative giving-up; it was a voluntary yielding in and to love, a release of outgoing emotion in the opposite direction from that of the ego-centric will-ful Eros." The same challenge, I believe, faces the West today, and involves the entire span of human activity from contemplation to small social groups to world government and peace. As products of the civilization which has produced us, we bring the same issues with us into the monastery.

Dialoguing with the Gift demands some awareness of how far the Gift has carried mankind already. Again, Rank puts it beautifully,

"In his profound work, Nygren shows that in the early days of Christianity fellowship with God was conceived of in three different ways - by Judaism, by Hellenism, and by Christianity, respectively, that is to say, by man's fulfilling of the Law (NOMOS), by man's desire for heavenly values (the platonic EROS), and by God's own love freely bestowed on the sinner (AGAPE).

While the Jew was commanded by his God to love lest he be punished - which really means respect out of fear - the Christian conception of love is based on the idea of being good through being loved. But this meant being loved by God not by man, as it was realistically interpreted, i.e., misinterpreted from the beginning right up to our day... Yet, we might say that this Christian love is a purely internal experience justifying the Self; for being loved by God manifests itself as love for God, and can only be experienced on the basis of self-acceptance.

The difference between the love philosophies in Antiquity and the Christian era can be stated as the difference between coercive possessiveness versus yielding. Correspondingly, the Jewish God was a God of punishment and revenge, whereas the Christian God was one of love and forgiveness. The Jewish creed rested on righteousness: if you follow the commands of your God, that is, respect his laws, you are good. The Christian faith rested on being loved by God, which made you good." If you wonder whether you have ever experienced the difference between these fundamentally and usually unconscious religious attitudes, ask yourself how you respond to a text such as, "By his wounds we are healed." I Peter. As Christians we cannot hear or read that line with fish-eyed detachment! It grips us at a level far deeper than reason, for we have experienced the truth of it in the depths of our spirits. And to that extent, our response is "irrational" although not contradicting, hopefully, our reason. If we sense contradiction (that is, an experience of guilt rather than of healing) we have either repressed something or simply have not put our faith to work! When the liturgy presents us with texts such as this, we are being called out of ourselves and into an experience of God that is mediated. For ritual, incantation, even dogma, provide a buffer zone shielding us from too immediate an encounter with God. That is why we need them! We still have too much of the primitive in us to risk, without special grace, too close an encounter. The liturgy gives us the "right words and symbols, gestures", etc. for approaching the divine. Accepted with humility and with grateful love, liturgy leads us onward in the work of surrender. But if we should, even unconsciously, attempt to use these means to manipulate or control God, then we have debased the very roots of our religious commitment. And that kind of lust for power is bound to show up in our relations with others and in the forms of government we impose or espouse. It is the work of the Dark Nights to detach us from that struggle for control, among other things...

We have, in this paper, taken the liberty to do much "pre-ambulating" around the topic of Government, and this in the hope that we could highlight the sources of Wisdom. For in our Judaeo-Christian tradition, "wisdom" and "government" belong together. But wisdom ceases to be wise if it ignores the very wellsprings of culture.

"The more the critical reason dominates, the more impoverished life becomes; but the more of the unconscious, and the more of myth we are capable of making conscious, the more of life we integrate. Overvalued reason has this in common with political absolutism: under its dominion the individual is pauperized." C.G. Jung, *MEMORIES, DREAMS, REFLECTIONS*, p. 302.

I would like to close with the suggestion that if our contemplative lives are to flourish and bear fruit for the world, then we need to broaden and deepen our premises and attitudes concerning the very capacities we have for human life. In 1965 Pope Paul VI wrote,

"The concentration of the regard of one's heart on God, which we define as contemplation, becomes the highest and fullest activity of the spirit, the activity which even today can and must order the immense pyramid of all human activity." To line up his analogy with ours, we might say that contemplation becomes the highest and fullest activity of the spirit which even today can and must govern the vast sea of human rational and irrational life. As the "concentration of the heart" (not intellect alone) we are immediately plunged into the midst of that sea, at once so vitalizing, so dangerous, and so truly challenging.

"O God, Eternal Trinity, you gave value to the blood of your Son.
You are a deep sea. The deeper I enter the more I find, and the
more I find, the more I seek." St. Catherine of Siena, *DIALOGUE*.

Our response to the particular problems of Government in this tumultuous age of ours cannot help but be assisted to the degree that we are aware of what we bring to the subject in terms of all of our personalities, conscious and unconscious. In this chiarascuro and shifting zone of concepts and emotions, we make our way to God, led by the Love He has poured into our hearts.

"Thus have the paths of those on earth been straightened,
and men been taught what pleases you,
and saved, by Wisdom." Wisdom 9: 13.

A Postscript.

Myths? Symbols?

What is a myth? If you consult one of the standard dictionary definitions, you are likely to be thrown off the track. Webster's Collegiate tells us that a "myth" is "An imaginative story or a fable accepted for a time as history; an imaginery person, object or event. An unproved folktale or tradition." Obviously, when we speak of certain parts of Sacred Scripture as "myth" we mean more than that. For these definitions imply that there is something "false", something less than the truth in a myth. On the other hand, when we say that chapters 1 and 2 of GENESIS are "myths", we are stating that they contain truths which *EXCEED* our conceptual abilities. These are stories which grip us not only at the rational, but also at the intuitive level, and present a fullness of Truth not attainable in any other way.

What is a symbol? Webster offers: "Something that stands for something else; an emblem; sign: as, the sword is the symbol of war. Or, a character, mark, letter, etc. indicating something as a quantity in mathematics." A little more help here, but not much. Symbols as we meet them in revelation are indeed signs. But the whole point is that they both partly reveal and partly hide something that cannot be fully expressed. That is why the Creed is called a "symbolon": a sign of what can be only partially put into words. So the word "symbol" immediately reminds us both of our limited human capacities, and of our ability to transcend the here and now. These two elements are important when we study the ways in which Our Lord makes use of symbols. Symbols are really the kernals of His wonderful parables. And they do. - simultaneously three things: 1) mediate meanings which are not immediately evident (this is why children revel in symbols - for they operate at a level of immediacy, as do more primitive peoples;) 2) provide us with concrete images which expose us to values which *ARE* immediately evident as soon as the terms are grasped;) allow us to become "engaged" or involved at both the rational and non-rational levels, (intuitive and poetic) levels of our personalities. They speak to both halves of our brains. No wonder, then, that the Lord made copious use of them! But if *WE* wish to be open to the whole message of a myth or a symbol, we need to be in touch with the full range of our own powers, and not shut down reason in favor of unfounded myth, or shut down intuition in favor of a killing analytic reason. This is why it is so important for us, precisely as contemplatives, to know how we go about acquiring, processing and using our truth and our values in daily life. "What kind of a personality am I" says a lot about "What kind of openness do I bring to the Scriptures?"

Take, for example, two familiar symbols for God: Fountain of Life and Sun of Justice. The words "Life" and "justice" standing by themselves do convey some intellectual meaning to us. But they lie like corpses stretched out on a table by comparison with what happens when you link each of them with its appropriate image: "Life" as a "Fountain" conveys some inkling of God as the Unfailing Source of Being and activity. "Justice" as a "Sun" awakens a double awareness: the sun heals and vivifies the just; but it can burn and destroy the unjust. It is, as you can see, the use of symbols which gives power to our Faith commitments at the human level.

Symbols also serve another function in faith and worship. They keep us humble, open, "listening for more". We never fully probe an authentic symbol. If we approach it aggressively, it withdraws like a startled deer back into the forest of unconscious intuitions. We have to learn to simply "let them be", let them speak their truth, within us. They are "there" with their

numinous, mysterious, attractive force. On the other hand, we cannot permit our symbols (even the most sacred of them) to totally possess us at this irrational level. Whatever we can grasp intellectually of the symbol's content, we should reach after. That is why there is a science of theology. In matters of Faith, this reaching out is accompanied by the Holy Spirit and his grace assisting through the Gifts.

Symbols live long lives in humans. Today we respond to archtypes which were just as real to our most primitive ancestors! Very early in conscious development were connections made, for example, between "God" and "Light", or "God" and "Water". We realize today that much of what appeared to be primitive animism (worshipping of stones, sun, rivers, etc.) may have been symbolic worship, at least in its origins. But the precise message a primordial symbol gives can be changed by the facts of who and where and when and how the symbol appears. For culture mediates meanings and values drawn from earlier symbols, but also enriches or impoverishes them. That is why it is necessary for the Church to re-study its basic symbols - not to empty them of truth, but to make sure that they are still carrying the truths they are meant to signify. This on-going process literally keeps our "hope green"! God meet us - in the mediacy of his symbols and in the immediacy of his presence, within this particular time, culture, etc. And so the culture itself is a recapitulation and re-statement of all that has gone before in history. Through authentic symbols we are "connected" with Life, Light, the Waters of Truth, etc. in ways nothing else can rival. Our contemplative life is constantly being nourished at this level. And I believe the deepest spiritual and psychological pain of contemplative purifications comes when the symbols no longer seem to speak or mediate value. They grow cold, hard, stale. They fall apart, and we think we have lost our faith!

Symbols in prayerlife are an area we need to consider more closely. As we approach God, images and concepts are likely to be shattered. Why? Perhaps because they have become too "numinous" to be of help any longer. We were stopping at the image or concept or rational formula as if it were God. And this is idolatry. So they fall to pieces, and lose that "spell-binding" power. They do not, however, disappear. When and how God wills, we build them up again in greater freedom and awareness. They begin to mediate new truth, new value at higher levels of consciousness. And when this happens we experience it as "wholeness". We call it "deeper union with God", which it surely is. We have been through a "dissipative system" in which an "emergent possibility" has been realized.... More symbols to chew on!

So, myths and symbols are indispensable to growth in faith, hope and charity. They place us in an "equilibrium of opposites", like a force-field in which positive and negative electric charges are passing back and forth. And the energy flows. It is the same with us. We need whatever of clear conceptual truths about God theology has to offer. But we need also the unclear, non-conceptual wisdom which rises out of our irrational depths, formed in faith.

Endless expanse. The clear, rippling sea. White caps caressing the pier. A board poised over the rolling tides...
The sheer exaltation of a clean dive into those crystal waters, knowing well - knowing from experience - their unfailing capacity to support the human body.
A plunge. Nose full! ears dulled!
And the sea, mother of life, casts you to her bosom, playing the ancient game with consummate skill.

30 years? 40 years?

The pier again.
Endpoint in a sightless night, projecting outward, projecting inward over those swirling waters.
"God? my God? O yes, I know his name, but I have never seen his face. Where does he live?"

30 years? 40 years?

Out of the fading mists of memories and the crumbling strength of reality, rises the call, "Leap!"
I believe, Lord: help my unbelief.
Clean dive into the sea, my mother, cutting the currents midcourse; an arrow to her heart and then -
playful in her dread seriousness, she casts to the surface this weight entrusted to her love.

30 years? 40 years?

Probing the depths.
Probing without sight but in trustful plunges.
Faith is a life-wish overcoming death.
Spewing jets of concepts and foam-laced images no longer rise on the spray, but sink to their unmeasured fathoms.
Sight is gone, but the good salt taste remains.

DOMINICAN NUNS OF PARIS

Sister Mary of the Cross, O.
Bocaue, Bulacan, Philippines

Normally, God calls an individual to only one state of life; however, there have been instances when He has demanded from married couples the sacrifice of their first vocation to become religious. In this article, we shall speak of three of Saint Dominic's daughters who, with their husbands, separated to devote themselves in the religious state.

Several years after the foundation of the Monastery of Prouille, a wealthy couple from Toulouse agreed to separate and join Saint Dominic's incipient Order. Besides bringing her wealth to Prouille, Blanche, we can assume, brought great ability, for later when Saint Dominic sent for eight nuns from Prouille to assist the new community of Saint Sixtus, he appointed Sister Blanche prioress. Eventually, four of the Prouillian nuns returned to their monastery, but Sister Blanche was one who remained in Rome for the rest of her life.

Approximately four hundred years later, when wealth and political intrigues practically extinguished religious life in Prouille, Providence raised up Père Sébastien Michaëlis, a Dominican friar of Toulouse, to reform the spiritual life of the Fathers. He brought into his work a holy woman, Madame de Borret, who like her husband, wished to separate and dedicate herself to God in religion. M. de Borret entered the Society of Jesus; his wife, with her three sisters, received spiritual formation as Dominican nuns, under the direction of Pere Michaëlis. In due time a monastery was established in Toulouse under the patronage of Saint Catherine of Siena with Mme. de Borret, then Mère Marie de Jesus, as prioress. The community was poor, but its fervor attracted many persons to seek the advice and prayers of the nuns.

One who frequently knocked at the monastery door was the beautiful and gifted daughter of M. de Senaux, secretary of the King for the town of Toulouse. She was married to M. de Garibal, a distinguished member of Parliament. Mme. de Garibal was loved by the people for her works of charity and justice for the oppressed.

While M. de Garibal and Marguarite were deeply devoted to each other, they both experienced the call from God to separate and enter religious life. Not surprisingly, Marguarite chose the Monastery of Saint Catherine. When the day arrived for the two pious spouses to part, M. de Garibal conducted his beloved to the parlor where Mère Marie de Jésus and the community had gathered on the opposite side. In a voice filled with emotion, he told the prioress he was giving her his most precious treasure. Marguarite entered the enclosure, and kneeling at the grille, asked for his blessing. After blessing her, he choked out the words: "We go to the cross. We go to death."¹ At that, he hurried to the entrance where a carriage was waiting to take him to the Carthusian Monastery, La Grande Chartreuse.

The following day, Marguarite was given the Dominican Habit and added "of Jesus" to her baptismal name. The gifts of nature and grace the novice brought to the cloister were enriched by her fervent religious life, endearing her to the community. Later as subprioress, she was often asked to give counsel to numerous persons of all ranks of society.

A wealthy Parisian lady, Mme. de Saint-Paul, was inconsolable at the death of her son. Her Jesuit confessor suggested she write to Mère Marguarite in Toulouse for advice. A correspondence ensued which led to Mme. de Saint-Paul begging Mère Marguarite to make a foundation of Dominican Nuns in Paris. After all the legalities were completed, the prioress with five companions left Toulouse in 1627 for the great capital. It was the Feast of Saint Thomas Aquinas when they arrived at their destination, so they named the first monastery in Paris in his honor.

The nuns were welcomed by the archbishop who came to offer Mass in their chapel. Afterwards, he took Mère Marguarite by the hand, leading Queen Anne and the principal ladies of the court to the nuns' refectory where all were served, without distinction, on earthenware dishes. Her Majesty was so touched by the simplicity and religious spirit of the nuns that she and her ladies remained over night.

The amiability of the prioress drew many to the monastery where they found solace and inspiration to bear their trials. Mother's loving concern also went out to the many poor and suffering whom she could reach through the largesse of the Queen. God blessed the charity of the community by sending them good vocations.

A little less than ten years after this first Dominican Monastery was established in Paris, Mme. Effiat, a wealthy widow, and member of one of the most influential families in France, approached Mère Marguarite with the proposal of founding another monastery in this city for her daughter Marie-Charlotte. The prioress was placed in a very delicate position; she knew the close relationship between the Effiat family and that of the Richelieu; and she did not wish to become involved with the latter, but her objections were brushed aside by the archbishop and her own spiritual director. Meanwhile Cardinal Richelieu encouraged Marie-Charlotte, his favorite niece, to take her vocation seriously.

When the decision was made for the second foundation, the community was divided; several of the nuns believed it would result in the loss of friendship with their foundress, Mme. Saint-Paul. They made formal protest against Mother's departure, and an accusation of her dishonest arrangement of financial matters. Mother proved that the Monastery of Saint Thomas had more than sufficient income, and that everything concerning the new foundation was in order with the spiritual and civil authorities. In her usual kindly manner, she begged the dissenting nuns to forget their grievances and to live in peace as in one family.

Thirteen years after Mère Marguarite opened the Monastery of Saint Thomas, she with five nuns and the "novice-foundress" Marie-Charlotte, in religion, Sister Mary of the Incarnate Word, left for their new home. Mother wished the foundation to be named the Monastery of the Cross, but respecting the opinion of the other nuns, she wrote out several pious names. After invoking the Holy Spirit, they drew out the name: "Daughters of the Cross." In fact, they had started out under the shadow of the cross, and it would mark their foundation for many years to come.

Reading between the lines, one can appreciate some of the problems Mère Marguarite had to face. The enclosure could be entered

anytime by the queen or the foundress, Mme. Effiat. Queen Anne, a truly pious lady, found comfort in her conversations with the prioress. She had to live most of her married life separated from Louis XIII, due, it was believed, to Richelieu who was suspicious of her as a descendant of the House of Hapsburg. Sister Mary of the Incarnate Word, a simple member of the community, was co-foundress of the monastery and the favorite niece of Richelieu. Boarders were admitted into the monastery for education. Yet, despite those extraneous factors, the prioress maintained religious observance and emphasized evangelical poverty.

When the prior of La Grande Chartreuse, Dom Garibal died, two priests were sent to Paris to inform Mère Marguarite. It was an occasion of deep and mixed emotions, and she was touched by the relics the priests brought her: Dom Garibal's leather belt, his wooden bowl and a stone that he was accustomed to use to strike his breast. Mother saw in them the symbols of the grace that had united them: mortification and a consuming love of the cross. They echoed, as it were, his parting words: "We go to the cross. We go to death."

Mère Marguarite had the gift of prophecy. Once she confided to her Sisters that she seemed to see the altar of Notre Dame overthrown, for the anger of God is aroused by the outrages against justice. She also saw corpses piled on carts going to the cemetery of Saint Marguarite where they were thrown, heaped one on the other. Those words written in L'Anne Domincaine of 1689 by Père Soueges, O.P., a century before the French Revolution, were thought by a later editor to be prophetic of the goddess of Reason being placed on the altar of Notre Dame, and of the rioters heaping up their victims in the cemetery of Saint Marguarite. Mother also foretold the exact date and circumstances of the death of two persons as well as the date of her own death.

Another side of Mère Marguarite was plunged in deep mystery: she had visits from the souls in purgatory. The nuns often heard a mournful cry or groan come from her cell. When they asked about it, Mother would simply tell them to say the De Profundis for some souls. Sometimes she would mention the name for whom she asked prayers, and later it would become known that the person mentioned died at the precise time the mysterious sounds were heard.

After a brief illness, it was evident that the Mother's prediction of her own death was about to be fulfilled. She was attentive as the prayers for the dying were being offered, and her life terminated with the last word of the final prayers. The wounds she had inflicted on her body in union with her Crucified Lord were found when the nuns prepared her for burial, and her clothing exuded a heavenly perfume.

More important than any supernatural signs pertaining to the holy foundress was the charism she bequeathed her daughters: a charity that goes out promptly to those in need. About fifty years after her death, Divine Providence gave the nuns an opportunity to render spiritual and material support to a struggling society dedicated to the teaching of poor boys under the direction of Père John-Baptist de la Salle. This holy priest was the devoted chaplain of the Monastery of the Cross, and the nuns reciprocated with a cordial and

sisterly interest in his efforts to stabilize his religious society, the Christian Brothers. Through the vicissitudes Père John-Baptist and his Brothers endured from 1703 to 1711, the Dominican Nuns alone gave them financial and other material help. When the Brothers found themselves in a difficult situation, they would say: "Let us go to the Cross." A deep spiritual bond united the two communities. At the canonization of the holy Founder, the nuns asked to have him as the secondary patron of their monastery, and for the privilege to solemnize his feast day.

In 1789, the Parisian monasteries soon experienced pressure from the Revolutionists. The first encounter of the nuns with the Municipal Officers was an offer to "free" them from their vows. Then, periodic visits were made to search for hidden valuables, which to their surprise, consisted only of the sacred vessels found in the sacristy; those they promptly confiscated. Once the Officers were satisfied that the nuns gave service to the people by means of education, they were allowed, after their dispersal, to live in small groups as seculars.

The trials the nuns endured through the years of the horrible French Revolution will have to be omitted here. Sufficient to say, they suffered a "white martyrdom"; many died during their exile, though none were condemned to death.

The smaller Parisian community of Dominican Nuns of Saint Thomas Monastery fared less favorably from one point of view, for they were dispersed without the opportunity of living in groups. Each nun had to go wherever she could find hospitality. However, two of their community were destined to make the supreme sacrifice of their lives. Sister Chrysostom, Angelique Desmariasi the former novice mistress, fifty years of age, and Sister Thais, Ann Aubert, thirty-five years of age who had been sacristan, went to the home of a mutual friend, Mlle. de Goyon. This valiant woman was receiving priests to offer Mass and administer the Sacraments; consequently, she and her guests were under suspicion.

One day the Officers of the Commission made a thorough search; without difficulty, they found Mass vestments, sacred vessels and the like. The three women stood, as if petrified, while the men opened drawers and closets. Finally, one officer knocked down a band-box from a high shelf; opened it, pulled out two small ivory boxes from which fell small, white Hosts. All the evidence was unmistakably clear: this house was being used for religious services. Mlle. de Goyon and the two nuns were taken away, condemned to death and executed May 11, 1794.

The nuns had lived years hidden in the cloister; after the Revolution, their community disappeared from history; the very story of their martyrdom lies almost in obscurity. Nevertheless, they were the only Dominican Nuns martyred during the French Revolution: they, with their benefactor, gave their lives that the Eucharistic Presence could be reserved, at least for a time during that violent persecution.

This beautiful story of three martyrs of the Holy Eucharist is

well authenticated. It appeared in Anne Dominicaine 1908-1909, written by Père Faucher, O.P., who obtained his information from the verbal process drawn up by the members of the Committee.

While the French Revolution ended in 1799, the Daughters of the Cross were not permitted to return to their monastery then. From the time Mme. Effiat gave the property to the nuns, the King held the title. After all the changes in the government during the war, the ownership of the monastery was held in question. Finally, in 1825, the monastery was restored to the nuns, but in a pitiful condition due to thirty-six years of profane use. With the courage typical of nuns, they repaired the damages and resumed their contemplative life besides teaching poor girls: a situation required by circumstances. It is noteworthy that the monastery in Nay, Southern France, which holds a significant place in the family tree of our U.S. monasteries, also had to resort to teaching young girls after the Revolution for approximately fifty years. In time, God blessed both those struggling communities with vocations. As for the Monastery of the Cross, Providence was preparing the community for another work of charity that would involve sacrificing one of its promising novices.

After many disappointments in his efforts to obtain sisters to teach in his vast California mission, Bishop Joseph Alemany, O.P. went to the Monastery of the Cross in 1850, for he knew the nuns were teaching poor girls. He addressed the community concerning the dire need for Catholic education of girls in the new State where gold had been discovered recently, and immigrants were flocking to amass wealth. Women comprised only 10% of the population, and moral conditions were bad. The nuns listened with interest and sympathized with the good bishop, but no one volunteered to leave the cloister for the apostolate in the far west. Nevertheless, grace was working. After Mass the following morning, a novice, Sister Mary of the Cross, offered herself to the Archbishop's mission. She had been in the cloister for two years; now, with God's grace, she would retain her contemplative spirit while becoming an apostle and foundress.

After crossing the Atlantic Ocean, Bishop Alemany, Father Vilarasa, O.P. and Sister Mary of the Cross made the arduous journey over the Isthmus of Panama on mules. This part of the journey gives us a glimpse into Sister's practical manner of handling a difficulty. One day, the bishop's mule balked, and simply refused to move after the usual "encouragements" of the bishop and priest. Then, Sister rode up directly behind the bishop's mule and gave him a swift kick. The effect was immediate action, and the party continued to the west coast where they boarded a fishing schooner, sailed up the Pacific to San Francisco, then to Monterey, at that time the capital of California. Soon two Dominican teaching Sisters from Ohio joined Sister Mary of the Cross, and three months later the first convent school in California was blessed. Meanwhile, the community in Paris, ever mindful of its former novice, sent large boxes of supplies for the Sisters and school.

Guided by Mother Mary of the Cross, her little community developed into the Dominican Sisters of the Congregation of the Holy Name of Jesus whose Mother House is in San Rafael, California. In the spirit of their foundress, they are presently engaged in various apostolates in the United States and missionary territories.

After touching briefly on the unusual mission of the Monastery of the Cross in California, we shall pick up the thread of its history in France. During the Siege of Paris in the German-Franco War of 1870, the monastery was a focal point of the enemy who thought there was a secret tunnel from their cloister to the Versailles. Again the nuns were dispersed, and their monastery was taken over by the military who decided to use the building as a field hospital. In fact, that decision of the enemy saved the monastery from total destruction.

When the nuns were finally able to return to their monastery, it bore the gruesome marks of its war-time use. Nevertheless, the community was happy to be united with their newly elected prioress Mère Marie Imelda, a young nun of thirty-three years of age. Mother saw the need for reform after the ordeals the community had suffered. Her first step in changes was to release the nuns from the obligation of teaching: they were to live an exclusively contemplative life. Strenuous objections were made by the department of education and many civilians, but the prioress was firm in her decision, and made it clear that the nun's vocation was to pray; education had been an urgent work imposed on them due to the circumstances of the time.

The Laws of Expulsion promulgated in France at the beginning of the twentieth century, made it necessary for the community of the Monastery of the Cross to go to Belgium. Time proved this dispersion was soon to be followed by others. During the German occupation of France in World War I, the old Parisian monastery was destroyed, putting an end to the nuns' hopes of eventually returning to their home. After a time, they took refuge in East Flanders for several months, and from there went to a town near Tours.

Incidentally, this sketchy account of the frequent suppression of monasteries, will help us to understand the reason the Church withheld the privilege of solemn vows for nuns: a deprivation our monasteries in the United States experienced for many years.

Finally, the nuns secured a site for a new Monastery of the Cross in Kain, Belgium about twenty-five kilometers from Lille, France, and close enough to the Saulchoir that the Dominican Fathers could be their chaplain and conduct classes in Theology for them.

In 1927, the community celebrated the third centenary of the founding of their first Parisian monastery. God had led them throughout the years over a long route with many detours and lack of security, but now they were located, as their beloved foundress, Mère Marguarite, had so ardently desired: in a monastery set in a garden with many trees, and near their Brethren who would care for their spiritual needs.

World War II was an era of suffering for all Europeans; the nuns of the Monastery of the Cross, like others, experienced severe poverty, but with the blessing of remaining in their monastery. We heard from them in 1949 when they were recovering peacefully from the effects of the war. God willing, they are now prospering as a happy and holy community in the great family of Dominican Nuns.

FOOTNOTE

1. Lorbes, G.

Les Filles de la Croix
Perrine, Paris 1927, p. 19

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CHRISTMAS EVE

Heaven has spilled its silence
Over the world this night,
Like the hush preluding
The first hillside glorias.
We are drenched in its stillness.
We let it seep into the hollows
Round our hearts,
Caves made ready
For the echo of the Word
To be whispered there
In our human-kind.
The star of His coming
Beckons our love.
Let us go over in haste
To Bethlehem
Carrying our flutes.

Sister Mary Joseph, O.P.
Los Angeles, Ca.

A SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS, POET

Sister Mary Elizabeth, O.P.
Newark

It seems appropriate to bring forward this little biography of the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins at this time, since the centenary of his death is only three years hence. Gerard is now regarded by many as a major poet. He left the stamp of genius on his art, which many have tried to follow. The difficulty of bringing this 'immortal diamond' into the daylight lies in his many diverse facets. He is a priest, a Jesuit, a composer of music, an artist. Architecture and scientific investigation were among his pursuits and among his friends were outstanding people. All combine to fashion a rich personality. But for the purposes of this essay I prefer to remain with Gerard, the poet, because this is the area in which he is best known.

Gerard was born of a prosperous Anglican family at Stratford, Essex, on July 28, 1844. He was the eldest of nine children. His father, Manley Hopkins was consul general for Britain of the Hawaiian islands. He was of Welsh ancestry, a cultured, intellectual man, something of a poet. He published a history of Hawaii and some valuable works on marine insurance and other allied subjects. Gerard's mother was the daughter of a well-known London doctor and was unusually well educated for a woman of those times. She brought artistic talent to her family and was well read in philosophy, history and politics.

In 1852, when Gerard was eight years old, the family moved to Oak Hill, Hampstead, now part of London, where Gerard attended a day school. At ten, he became a pupil in a Grammar School in Highgate. The school was famous for the many literary men who had graduated there: Lamb, Keats, Coleridge and De Quincey. Gerard had a brilliant mind, with a sensitive and somewhat original disposition. He was not happy at school. He was to say later: "I had no love for my schooldays." 1. The austere side of his character came to the fore in a self-imposed fast from any form of liquid, which lasted a week, after which he collapsed in the drill yard. That he was not lacking in moral courage was shown in that he regularly read a passage from the New Testament. As he was the only boy in the dorm to do this, the practice at first provoked ridicule, but in the end 'Skin', as he was called, won out. Several friendships date from this period, notably with a young master named Richard Watson Dixon, newly ordained to the Anglican ministry, who became a life-long friend. A schoolmate describes Gerard as;

...full of fun, rippling over with jokes and chaff, facile with pencil and pen...one of the nicest boys in the school, with his face always set to do what was right. 2.

Two prize-winning poems belong to this period, 'The Escorial' and 'A Vision of the Mermaids'. Both demonstrate a mastery of language unusual in a teenage boy. But Gerard's thoughts were turned towards art rather than poetry when, in 1863, he won a scholarship to Balliol College, Oxford. This was like passing from night into day and was to last from 1863 to 1867.

Oxford was a happy memory for Gerard: he writes in one of his sonnets:

Towery city and branchy between towers;
Cuckoo-echoing, bell-swarmed, lark-charmed, rook-racked,
river-rounded; 3.

A lifelong friendship was begun with Robert Bridges, the future poet-laureate. Numerous letters to Bridges are extant, and it was to his friend that Gerard turned for a critique of his poems. After Gerard's early death, his poems were confided to Bridges who eventually saw to their publication. Several poems belong to this Oxford period, and it was the gradual realization of his gift for literary expression that weaned him from love of art to the poetic manifestation of that gift. He studied the style of many writers and poets. From his diary we can follow his interests and his earnestness in all that he undertook. Many projects, started with enthusiasm, came to nothing. There were various reasons for this which seem to have dogged him all his life.

At this time Oxford was in the full tide of German rationalism that prompted a reaction among Christians of many shades of belief, by way of defence. There was deep feeling on both sides, much eloquence was poured out and excitement engendered. Gerard had a brief flirtation with the prevailing liberalism under the influence of several great men who are only names today. He soon began to attend the crowded Sunday evening lectures of the Reverend Henry Parry Liddon, an Anglican minister and his tutor⁴ at Balliol. Liddon, in fact, became his first confessor. Gerard was to say later that his contrition had never exceeded that of his first confession to Liddon.

In order to understand the influences and motives that drew Gerard towards Catholicism, it is necessary, at this point, to say something about the Oxford Movement, the effects of which played an important role in his spiritual development. We have to go back thirty years to the summer of 1833 when John Keble, an Anglican theologian and professor, preached a sermon on national apostasy which had a dynamic effect. It stimulated a movement of reform in the Anglican church. This movement was incited almost to frenzy by two other young professors, Edward Pusey and John Henry Newman, who published a series of anonymous 'Tracts For The Times', ninety in all, dealing with various aspects of church doctrine and practice in the light of the teaching of the Fathers of the Church. As might be expected, a counter movement quickly sprang up among the evangelicals, later known as the Low Church party, in an effort to stem the tide. The Tractarians, or High Church party, as they came to be known, succeeded in bringing about certain reforms and in influencing the religious views of the public throughout England. There was strong feeling against this 'romanism'. The Tractarian movement came to be called the Oxford Movement, by reason of its origin in that university. Newman and many of his followers later found their position as Anglicans, believing and practising Catholic doctrine, an untenable one and entered the Catholic Church. Keble and Pusey, however, did not do so.

In 1863, when Gerard came on the scene, the movement had spent its early force, but in Oxford feelings still ran high in some quarters. Gerard was drawn to Puseyism and began to call himself a Tractarian, though it is doubtful whether his ideas were formulated as yet. In course of time he became disenchanted with Puseyism, which, as movements tend to do, had deteriorated

from the first fine principles of its author. It is impossible to follow Gerard closely in his spiritual journey towards Catholicism since he has not left us a guide book, such as Newman's 'Apologia Pro Vita Sua'. But those of us who have trod the same uncertain, but exciting, path can guess the conflicting influences, the steps forward and the hesitations, the hopes and fears, as the light grows stronger. It was during the Fall of 1865 that the realization of approaching change made itself felt in Gerard's mind. We find Newman's hymn 'Lead Kindly Light' carefully copied in his diary. He began to fast quite rigorously. His poem 'The Habit Of Perfection', written at this time, reflects this ascetical approach. He wrote to Newman, then at Edgbaston, Birmingham, asking for an interview, but the great convert was overseas at the time. However, a meeting was eventually arranged and Gerard was able to talk over his position with one who had been through it all. Having laid out all his reasonings, he concluded: "I can see no way out of them". "Nor can I". replied Newman.⁵

Another two months were to elapse, however, before Newman could write in his diary:

Mr. Hopkins came from Oxford and was received.⁶

It was October 21, 1866. Gerard now returned to Oxford to finish his final year, but things were not the same. To those who have always been Catholics, a convert is someone who has 'come home'. Actually, it is more like a desert experience. One's relatives and friends do not understand. Many regard it as a betrayal of the Anglican church, a perversion rather than a conversion. Gerard lost several friends and when he wrote the news to his parents:

Their answers are terrible. I cannot read them twice.⁷

Being a brilliant student, he ended his university career with a double first in Mods and Greats.

He now returned to Edgbaston for one year to teach in Newman's Oratory school. This afforded him the wise guidance of the older man as to the next step. Gerard felt a call to the monastic life and was drawn to the Benedictines, but Newman advised the Jesuits. It was therefore to the Provincial of the English Jesuits that he applied and was accepted.

He began his novitiate at Roehampton, near London, in September 1868. The change from Oxford must have been a difficult one. Gerard was twentyfour and found himself in a group of youngsters of about eighteen. He had to adapt himself to the strenuous way of life, the pious exercises and devotional practices that were considered a necessary part of the training of young novices at that time. A life more unlike the freedom of the university cannot be imagined. No exceptions were made for age or university degrees! Yet Gerard seems to have been well liked by his fellow novices and very peaceful and content. One of these spoke of him later:

He had a strong, manly will of his own. He was quite simple and did not show off his learning...He spoke out pretty straight what he thought.⁸

Another said:

He was naturally somewhat eccentric in his views and ways, but these ways were pleasing and many of them original. Great genius must be excused eccentricities. ⁹.

On entering Roehampton Gerard had put behind him his poetic gift. He wrote to his friend Robert Bridges that he had burnt all his early poems:

I saw they would interfere with my state and vocation. 9.

From then on until 1876 he wrote no poems

except a few little presentation pieces that were called for. 10.

The novitiate lasted two years, at the end of which he took his first vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Then he passed on to St. Mary's Hall, near Stonyhurst College in Lancashire. This was the studentate for 3 years of philosophy, following the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas. While in the library one day, Gerard stumbled across a copy of Duns Scotus' Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard. Excited by the discovery and the affinity he experienced with his own way of thought, he eagerly embraced the teaching of the Franciscan. He was wise enough to keep this find to himself. Outwardly he went along with the Thomist teaching, completing his course successfully, but his mind was with that of Scotus. Few, if any, of his companions were aware of what was happening. Gerard writes:

At this time (August 1872) I had just begun to get hold of a copy of Scotus on the Sentences...and was flush with a new stroke of enthusiasm. It may come to nothing or it may be a mercy of God. 11.

At the end of the three year philosophy course he was sent back to Roehampton for a year to teach the juniors, that is, those who had just completed their novitiate. At the conclusion of this year, that is, in the Fall of 1874, he was moved to St. Beuno's College in North Wales (pronounced By-nose) for his three year theological program. St. Beuno's was not an attractive setting for a poet. The building was ugly. The surroundings were dull. The climate was cold and bleak and the place was almost inaccessible. But for Gerard it meant three happy years. He loved scenery "of wet and of wildness" and grew fond of the Welsh people, even to the extent of learning their difficult language. There are a couple of poems in Welsh in the complete edition of his poems.

Two important events took place during this period. In 1875 Gerard began to write poetry again and in 1877, on September 23, he received priestly ordination. The first event came about through a tragedy. A ship, the Deutschland, carrying refugees from the German Falk laws to hoped-for freedom in America, was wrecked near the Thames estuary. There were five Franciscan nuns aboard, all of whom were lost. Gerard was deeply touched and said so to the Rector, Father Jones, S.J. The Rector replied that he wished someone would write a poem on the subject. Gerard took this as a freedom to return to poetic verse with the full sanction of authority. The result was a thirtyfive stanza poem: The Wreck Of The Deutschland, which clearly foreshadows his future greatness. It is written throughout in a new 'sprung' rhythm which had been haunting his ear and which now he could freely produce on paper. This was to become the hallmark of Gerard's future work. An explanation of this rhythm is beyond the scope of a short biography and must be reserved for a future article.

Soon after his ordination, Gerard was sent into parish work for four years. He had a variety of experiences. London was the first, where he stayed for four months as special preacher. The church was situated in the fashionable area of Mayfair. Then came Oxford, as assistant pastor to the Reverend Father Parkinson, S.J. at St. Aloysius Church. With the university he had no contacts at all, his work lay entirely with the parish and with a military barracks at Cowley, just outside the city. In the spring of 1879,

Father Parkinson met with an accident and was off duty for several weeks. This meant Gerard had full charge of the parish. On the pastor's return, he fell sick and again Gerard had the full responsibility. The strain took its toll on his health and his superiors were obliged to remove him after barely two years. His next assignment was Bedford Leigh, near Manchester, an industrial town, from whence he was moved on to Liverpool, and from there to Glasgow. Gerard seems to have liked parish work, because he loved people, but the conditions of the poor appalled him. Liverpool and Glasgow were his first encounter with the ugliness of extreme poverty. The overcrowding, the dirt, the vice, disease, drunkenness and the high death rate all moved him with compassion. He wrote:

My Liverpool and Glasgow experience laid upon my mind a conviction...of the misery of town life...of the misery of the poor, of the degradation of our race, of the hollowness of this century's civilization. ¹³.

He wrote little poetry during these years:

My muse turned sour. ¹⁴

He spent many hours in the confessional and often refers to fatigue and ill-health. Depression dogged him now and continued to do so periodically for the rest of his short life.

In 1881, Gerard was recalled to Roehampton for his tertianship, a ten month period of peace and seclusion, designed to enable the Jesuit to renew his fervor if it had worn thin. Prayer, solitude and spiritual reading were the order of the day.

My mind is here more at peace than it has ever been, (wrote Gerard to his friend Canon Dixon,) and I would gladly live all my life, if it were so to be, in as great, or greater, seclusion from the world and be busied only with God. ¹⁵

It was at the end of this "schola affectus", as St. Ignatius called it, that Gerard made his final vows. Two months later, we find him at Stonyhurst again, not at St. Mary's Hall as before, but at the boys' college. This college owed its origin to the times of persecution in England. It was impossible for Catholic parents to educate their children at home. It was a penal offence to send them abroad for education, but, in various ways, boys were smuggled out of the country. English schools sprang up in France and the Low Countries to cope with the situation. One of these was the Jesuit school at St. Omer in northern France. In later, and better, times this was transferred to Stonyhurst in Lancashire, where it still flourishes as a Jesuit college of high standing for Catholic boys of well-to-do parents. To this school Gerard was now assigned to teach Latin and Greek to candidates seeking London University entrance. He was here until the Spring of 1884, well liked by his fellow Jesuits, in spite of his originality, which marked him out from among his peers. None seemed to be aware of his poetic gifts, he was known for his art and love of music.

The next, and last, change in his life came in 1884. At forty, Gerard was appointed professor of Greek and Latin at University College, Dublin. This college had had a chequered career. Founded in 1851 by the Irish bishops as the Catholic University of Ireland, John Henry Newman was appointed its first rector. It was here, in Dublin, that Newman delivered his famous course on "The Idea Of A University". But the new university was doomed to failure from the

start, owing to difficulties on both sides of the Irish Sea. Jealousies and prejudices arose, English prejudice against Irish and Irish against English. English Catholics were averse to sending their sons to a university in Ireland, even with the great name of John Henry Newman as a bait. Not all the Irish bishops were in favor of a university staffed by English converts, and from Oxford! Meanwhile Newman was obliged to return to England on pressing business and the university struggled on for twenty years. At this point, the Irish hierarchy asked the Jesuits to reorganize the whole affair, which was renamed University College, Dublin. It was a few years later that Gerard was appointed a professor to the project that had been his friend Newman's greatest failure and disappointment.

It would appear a normal assignment for a man of Gerard's academic standing, yet he found it excessively burdensome. He tells of five yearly examinations, which he had annually to prepare and correct, of "557 papers on hand". He speaks of: "An Irish row over my appointment." Some of the Irish bishops wanted someone else, but he was warmly welcomed at the college. His health was poor and he felt inadequate to the task. His eyes troubled him and he was "wearisomely tired". He had barely recovered from a nervous prostration earlier in the year. Part of his present trouble was loss of sleep. He was always in a state of over-anxiety lest he had marked a student's paper unfairly. His sense of honesty, or rather scrupulosity, would lead him to revise the marking of the paper over and over again. Many hours of precious sleep were lost in this way. Writing music was an outlet for his depression and nervous weakness. He loved music. Art was another relief. Five years were to pass in this painful condition. The 'terrible' or 'dark' sonnets were written at this time, so called because they express the keenest suffering. This period seems to have been a spiritual purgation, his 'dark night'. Some of his expressions remind one of St. John of the Cross. This was:

my winter world 18

The end came in 1889, when Gerard contracted typhoid fever. He knew he would not recover. On June 5, Father Wheeler, S.J. who nursed him tenderly throughout his illness, gave him Viaticum, which he received with great devotion. On hearing of his parents' arrival from England, Gerard was disturbed at first, but when the visit was over, he expressed great satisfaction at having them with him.

On June 8 he was given the final blessing and absolution. The prayers for the dying were said by Fr. Wheeler, with the parents joining in. Shortly after this he passed peacefully to the Lord. His last words were:

I am so happy. I am so happy. 19.

Gerard was buried in the Society's burial ground at Glasnevin. There is a memorial plaque in the 'Poet's Corner' of Westminster Abbey, London, and also a baptismal font with an inscription in his memory at St. Aloysius Church, Oxford. Both of these enshrine the memory of:

a man so lovable that we shall not soon look upon his like again. 20.

FOOTNOTES

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2. Ibid. page 23.
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5. Op.cit. Ruggles. page 84.
6. G.F.Lahey, S.J. Gerard Manley Hopkins. page 43.
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8. Ibid. Ruggles. page 112.
9. Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges. Letter xx11. page 24.
10. The Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon. Letter 111. Page 14.
11. Op.cit. Lahey. page 131.
12. Op.cit. Poems. 3rd Edition. Inversnaid. page 56.
13. Op. cit. Correspondence. Letter xx11. page 97.
14. Unable to identify this quote.
15. Ibid. Letter xv. page 75.
16. Ibid. letter xxx11. page 123.
17. Op.cit. Letters. Letter cx1. page 191.
18. Peter Milward, S.J. Commentary On The Sonnets. To R.B. page 194.
19. Op. cit. Lahey. page 124.
20. Op.cit. Lahey. page 147.

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JONAH AND JONAH

Sister Mary of the Cross, O.P.
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Perhaps the most widely known on the roster of prophets is Jonah, even though the majority of his so-called acquaintances could tell you no more about him than that he was swallowed by a whale and lived in its belly for three days and three nights.

In four brief chapters, the unknown author of the Book of Jonah tells us: The voice of God came to Jonah: "Go to Nineveh and speak out against it. I am aware of how wicked its people are" (Jonah 1:3). Without further ado, Jonah took off, not to get a camel and travel eastward, but to Joppa to board a boat destined for Tarshish, possibly Tartessus, a Phoenician colony in southern Spain: the farthest point west then known to the Hebrews. While we cannot condone Jonah's disobedience, we can appreciate the fear that must have overcome him at the thought of not only entering Assyria, the arch-enemy of his country, but of being commissioned to preach repentance to the inhabitants of its capital city.

God had His eye on this escapee; He would show him through a series of extraordinary events that He, the Powerful Lord of the universe, is also loving and merciful. A violent storm threw the crew sailing to Tarshish into panic. Jonah's guilty conscience made him confess that he was the cause of their perilous state, and he asked the sailors to throw him overboard. After some hesitation, they complied. No sooner had Jonah hit the water than the storm subsided.

A great fish swallowed Jonah at the command of God, and there the belligerent prophet was entombed in the belly of the sea monster for three days and three nights before God ordered its victim spewed on the beach.

Again, the Lord told Jonah to go to Nineveh and proclaim the message He had given him. This time Jonah obeyed. His sermon was terse: Nineveh will be destroyed in forty days. He did not wish the inhabitants to be converted; however, to his astonishment, the king and the entire population repented; even the beasts of the field fasted in sack cloth and ashes.

Jonah was irate; things had not turned out the way he wished. He went out of the city; built a shelter for himself where he could sit at a vantage point awaiting the destruction of Nineveh.

God made a plant grow over Jonah's shelter to give him some comfort, but the next day He commanded a worm to attack the plant and it died. With nothing to prevent the burning sun and hot east wind from beating on his head, Jonah grew faint and cried out for death.

God said to him, "What right do you have to be angry about the plant? It grew up one night and disappeared the next; you didn't do anything for it...yet you feel sorry for it. How much more then, should I have pity for Nineveh, that great city. After all it has more than 120,000 innocent children in it, as well as many animals" (Jonah 4:9-11).

The Book of Jonah ends thus, a biting satire: the defeated prophet asking for vengeance while God extends His mercy not only to sinful men and innocent children, but even to brute animals.

The author was a clever writer whose mental attitude concerning the universality of God's love for man came close to Christianity. He brought out the narrow mindedness of postexilic Judaism represented by "his" Jonah who did not wish to share with other people God's merciful love. The details of his story are so exaggeratedly non-historical that his Hebrew readers could get the full impact of the satire and their Semitic minds would delve into the hidden meaning; unlike those of western mentality who would ask: Is the story true?

For centuries scholars have argued as to whether the Book of Jonah is historical or if it is a parable. Among some of the Fathers of the Church, we have St. Augustine's reply to one who said the story of Jonah was derided by the pagans. "...As our friend has not asked the question whether it should be believed that Lazarus was raised on the fourth day or whether Christ himself rose on the third day, I find it astonishing that he sets down the incident about Jonah as incredible, unless he thinks it easier for a dead man to be raised from the tomb than for a living man to be preserved in the belly of a beast."¹

Speaking of Jonah having been saved in the fish and of Christ's resurrection, St. Cyril of Jerusalem gave his opinion in a succinct sentence: "If the former is credible, so is the latter. If the latter is incredible, so is the former."²

Until recent times, the historicity of Jonah was generally accepted. Presently, most biblical scholars agree it is a didactic narrative, satirical in style with deep theological lessons. However, before enlarging on this point, we might digress to identify the two Jonahs.

During the reign of Jeroboam II (783-743 B.C.) a prophet Jonah, son of Amathi, native of Gath-happen, modern Meshhed in Galilee, announced that the king would restore the boundaries of Israel (2Kg. 14:25). The prediction was fulfilled, for Jeroboam II restored Israel's ancient borders to what they had been in the time of David, bringing the kingdom to a peak of prosperity, rivaling that of Solomon.

Why the author of the Book of Jonah named his protagonist for the little-known prophet who lived about four centuries earlier, we can only speculate. Very likely, he too was a Galilean who wished to give recognition to the ancient prophet of his country, for even in the time of Christ, we can detect the attitude of contempt some had for Galilee. When Nicodemus reminded the Priests and Pharisees that they could not condemn Jesus without evidence, they sarcastically asked: "Are you from Galilee? Study the Scripture and you will find out no prophet ever comes from Galilee" (Jno. 7:52). Certainly, those Doctors of the Law knew that Jonah and, possibly, Hosea came from Galilee.

Another possibility for the choice of the name Jonah might have been the author's play on the word "dove". The actual meaning of Jonah is dove, and the chief sanctuary in Nineveh dedicated to the goddess Ishlar had the dove for its sacred bird.

The Book of Jonah is an example of the misleading interpretations given to many parts of the Bible before scientific study of Sacred Scripture was pursued. For this approach, we are indebted to our illustrious Dominican brother, Père Joseph-Marie Lagrange who believed Holy Scripture, like all literature, has to be studied by means of textual and literary criticism in its historical and ethnic context. Lagrange emphasized the need to use all the human sciences in order to grasp every nuance of the inspired word.

Approximately fifty years after Père Lagrange opened this new field of biblical studies to Catholic scholars, Pope Pius XII wrote his Encyclical Letter, "Divino Afflante Spiritu", giving wholehearted approval and encouragement to the scientific study of Sacred Scripture: serious study of the Bible must no longer be separated from the period and place in which the books were written. It seems much of the substance of that encyclical is based directly on conferences entitled "The Historical Method", given by Père Lagrange in Toulouse during the early days at his, now famous, Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem.³

In the light of the principles fully authorized by the Church, we can examine the historicity of the Book of Jonah. The story is true in the sense that each kind of literature bears witness to the truth. Present day scholars point out, among other facts, that the use of Aramaic words and expressions place the composition in the era after the exile, roughly between 400 and 200 B.C., a period when Nineveh had long since been destroyed and forgotten by the average person. The appearance of the grotesque fish and the sudden growth of the plant provide the atmosphere of a legend. Though the rediscovery of Nineveh yielded rich sources of information for archeologists, no inscription was found giving evidence that a mass conversion was ever realized through the preaching of Jonah or any prophet. The ruins of the city walls show that the city was a tremendous size for those times and must have had a population far beyond the number necessary for the existence of 120,000 infants.

While the favor is stronger on the side of the Book of Jonah being a didactic narrative than its being historical, there are, at least, two important questions proposed in support of its historicity. If the book is a narrative about a prophet, not containing the oracles of a prophet, why is it placed among the Minor Prophets? The reply given by biblical scholars is: the author drew heavily on earlier prophets, especially Jeremiah and Ezechiel; however, his moral teachings are presented in a more forceful and fascinating manner than those from whom he borrowed.

A more convincing point for Jonah being placed in a category of history, is the fact that Jesus used Jonah as one who foreshadowed Himself. St. Matthew records Jesus being confronted by His opponents who asked to see Him perform a miracle. "You ask me for

a miracle? No! The only miracle you will be given is the miracle of the prophet Jonah. In the same way that Jonah spent three days and three nights in the big fish, so will the Son of Man spend three days and nights in the depths of the earth" (Mt. 12: 39-40). Jesus then proceeded to contrast their infidelity with that of the pagans: the men of Nineveh responded immediately to Jonah's message; the Queen of the South recognized the wisdom of God in Solomon, but they, God's chosen people, refused the messenger of God and the wisdom of God standing before them. The only miracle they will receive is that of the resurrection to which all other signs lead. Jesus gave Jonah as a type of His resurrection, and typology is said to be satisfied if the type exists in the biblical narrative; it need not have a real existence.

Jesus' reference to Jonah can be accepted as an approximation, a manner of speech familiar to his audience. We find another example of this type of rhetoric in a letter of St. Paul warning his disciple Timothy to be on guard against men who contradict the truth as did "Jannes and Jambres", traditional names only given to the Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses in the court of Pharaoh (2Tim. 3:8).

"No one", wrote Pius XII, "who has a correct idea of biblical inspiration, will be surprised to find, even in the Sacred Writers, as in other ancient authors, fixed ways of expounding and narrating certain idioms, especially of a kind peculiar to the Semitic tongues, so-called approximations and hyperbolic modes of expression...". The Holy Father goes on to say that none is excluded from the Sacred Books as long as they do not contradict the holiness and truth of God. "God became like man in all things, sin excepted, so the words of God expressed in human language are made like to human speech in every respect, except error. In this consists that condescension of the God of Providence..."⁴

Whether one wishes to subscribe to the belief that the Book of Jonah is historical or didactic is secondary to the fact that it has been placed by the Church among its Canonical Books; in other words, it is "de fide" an inspired book. Inspiration does not demand history.

Our concern must be to endeavor to learn what the author wishes to teach us; his lessons are strikingly clear. We see God, the Master of the universe employing creatures as instruments in His plan: man, animals (even the insignificant worm), plant and elements. Each fulfilled its task; only man (Jonah) disobeyed, but despite his willfulness, God used him to be a missionary to a pagan land; a good example of the aphorism: "God writes straight with crooked lines." We marvel at the mercy and loving care God showed the notoriously wicked Ninevites from whom the Israelites had suffered severe oppression and brutal warfare. He is the God who said to Moses: "I will show compassion and pity on those I choose (Ex. 33:19). The Book of Jonah can be seen as a preparation for the Gospel message: Redemption is for all.

In concluding, it is interesting to note how Galilee, spoken

of but little in the Old Testament, has a rather significant, though hidden, place in the didactic narrative of Jonah. The real prophet Jonah was a native of Galilee (2Kg, 14:25). Assyria conquered Galilee in 721 B.C. and enslaved thousands of its inhabitants in Nineveh. It is not unlikely that the author of the Book of Jonah was a Galilean whose charism enabled him to perceive the time when Galileans would bring the message of God's mercy to pagan nations, unlike "his Jonah" who begrudged the love of God to non-Hebrews.

Some 400 years later, God stepped into the history of fallen man: the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity became incarnate in the womb of the Galilean Virgin Mary. Her Child was to be named Jesus according to the word of the angel "...because He will save His people from their sins" (Mt. 1:21). When Jesus began His public life, the towns around the Lake of Galilee were the center of His teaching by word and deed. He chose a group of Galileans as His Apostles to be the foundation of His Church which would carry the Good News to all nations for all times. To seal this new covenant between God and man, Jesus, the "Eternal Galilean", shed His last drop of Blood while nailed to a cross, proclaiming God's unfathomable love: redemption is for all; repent and believe in the merciful love of God.

Footnotes

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BOOK REVIEWS

ILLUMINATIONS OF HILDEGARD OF BINGEN

Text by Hildegard of Bingen with Commentary by Matthew Fox
Bear & Company, Inc. 1985; pp. 128; Price unknown (Paper).

As one who is interested in the world of symbolism expressed in art forms, I was drawn to the fascinating world of Hildegard of Bingen. This extraordinary woman lived in the Rhineland Valley (1098 - 1179), there developing her gifts as Benedictine abbess, preacher, doctor, scientist, artist, writer and musician. Previous to this outburst of energy, Hildegard struggled for years to cover up her talents, which often caused her to be confined to a sick bed. With her conversion came the decision to write her visions (illuminations) for the community - this brought about a physical recovery and got her out of bed! The twenty-one "Illuminations" come principally from one of her nine books, Scivias (Know the Ways). Her works received the approval of Pope Eugenius III and Bernard of Clairvaux. In 1979, Pope John Paul II, in the celebration of the 800th anniversary of Hildegard's death, referred to her as "outstanding saint", - a "light to her people and her time (who) shines out more brightly today."

The initial enthusiasm waned as I began to try to extricate Hildegard from Matthew Fox. One of the major difficulties with this book is that the reader sees Hildegard's text only in the context of the commentator. Without doubt Hildegard becomes a vehicle for Fox's ideas.

Another major difficulty is doctrinal. The reader begins to feel nervous with Fox's Creation Spirituality which tries to overcome limitations placed on our usual outlook and understanding of the spiritual realm. The question might well be raised whether or not Fox has lost the idea of transcendence and is involved in pantheism? And whether or not he is applying this to Hildegard who is a product of the Rhenish mystics who were involved in panentheism?

Among the positive contributions of this book is the psychological approach in the use of the mandala as a way to open up to images and the richness of their meaning. However it is questionable whether Hildegard was consciously choosing the mandala form.

Indeed the role of women is acknowledged as due attention is paid to Hildegard and her vision of creation and her expansive love as expressed in healing and restoration.

Through the instrumentality of this book one's curiosity may well be whetted to seek out further information on Hildegard from among the works listed in the section, "A Bibliographical Note for English-Speaking Readers".

Sister Mary Agnes
Summit

Information for the reader:

Scivias (Know the Ways) is available with black and white illuminations for \$14.95 which includes the Ordo Virtutum.

ILLUMINATION OF HILDEGARD OF BINGEN



19. *The Crucifixion and The Mass: Cosmic Events*

QUOTATION from text on pp. 91, 92, 93

Much of Hildegard's meditations on this vision constitute a commentary on the Mass, which Hildegard sees as a cosmic event that "cheers the inner strength" of persons and sustains them.

The one on top includes the crucified Christ with the mother church whom we have seen in previous visions... "I heard a voice from heaven saying: 'Son, let this woman be a bride to you in the restoration of my people. Let her be a mother for these people, regenerating souls through the salvation of spirit and water.' "

But the vast portion of Hildegard's meditation is not on the upper figure but the lower one. In that figure the cosmic event of the crucifixion of Christ is played out in human history by way of memory- there are four mirrors reminding us of the mysteries of Christ's life- and of worship.

In this way the cosmic celebration that the cross and the altar, mother church and her dowry gift of bread and wine represent truly makes the divine light shine in the hearts and places where humans dwell and where the Kingdom of God is to be found.

RELIGIOUS IN THE 1983 CODE, by Elizabeth McDonough, O.P., J.C.D. Franciscan Herald Press, 1984, 165 pages, \$5.50, paperback.

For those who have little or no canonical expertise this book is of special value. It introduces the reader into the mysterious world of canon law easily and skillfully. For religious it is an important tool to expedite the grasping of the significance of the 1983 Code in relation to our evolving life.

The author moves from an analysis of the meaning of law for the People of God in the early Church to a brief history of the development of Church law as the religious way of life unfolded in the patristic period, and follows its growth through the Middle Ages up to the present day. Against this background she discusses the enactments of the new Code regarding religious. Common life, obedience and the apostolate are given particular attention as Sr. McDonough focuses on the day-to-day effects of the new legislation. Since contemplative religious are situated at the heart of the Church an entire chapter is devoted to cloister for women. This may well be the first chapter you will want to read.

Sr. McDonough's approach to Canon Law is perceptive, balanced and not lacking in humor. Law is presented in its native character as a means, not a goal. To read her book with care is to grow in appreciation of the role of law in promoting and safeguarding the values of religious life.

Deserving of special mention are the Appendices, scholarly presentations of the revision process which led to the new Code, the principles guiding it, additional information on interim legislation, a run-down of transitional documents issued since its appearance, and best of all, the complete text of all the Canons concerning Institutes of Consecrated Life.

Our Dominican Sister offers no ready answers to questions, no quick solutions to problems, but what is far more valuable, she opens wide windows on a new view of the law.

Sr. Mary Thomas, Buffalo

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